

# **MARRIAGE IN CONTEMPORARY ZULU SOCIETY: IMPLICATIONS FOR COUPLE COUNSELLING**

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PhD in Social Work**

**by**

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**COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES  
DECLARATION – PLAGIARISM**

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Signed

.....

## DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my grandmother **Clara Sjögren-Wittgenstein** who first introduced me as a child to the need to respect and understand different cultural beliefs, values and practices,  
and to  
my sister-in-law **Nomathemba Priscilla Haselau** for introducing and welcoming me as an adult to respect and understand the different cultural beliefs, values and practices of the Zulu people.

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## ABSTRACT

Most Western therapeutic methods are based on the Western world view and are very individualistic, and may therefore not be appropriate for social work practice with African clients. This study focused specifically on marriage counselling. It aimed to explore the meaning of marriage among Zulu couples, elders and social workers with a view to recommending guidelines for marriage therapy with Zulu clients.

The research study was qualitative in nature and was guided by social construction theory. In social construction theory the social practices that people engage in to interact with each other influence the meaning that is ascribed, and how the world is viewed and understood. Thus social interaction within any culture determines how a person perceives reality, and this influences one's world view. As a result people with different world views will have a very different of understanding.

The study explored the beliefs, values, traditions and practices of marriage in contemporary Zulu society, and examined the resulting implications for marriage counselling in order to develop best practice guidelines. The study took place in two phases. In the first phase twelve couples who defined themselves as Zulu, nine Zulu family elders who had given relationship advice to their family members, and ten Zulu social workers who worked with couples and families in the community were sourced using snow ball sampling. They were interviewed in depth about their experiences, beliefs and values of being married as Zulu people. Thematic and discourse analysis generated four main themes that were of significance in Zulu marriages: belonging, respect or *hlonipha*, spirituality and *ubuntu*. Each of these themes was interlinked with each other and generated a number of sub themes.

In the second phase these results were discussed with the Durban and with the Pietermaritzburg FAMSA (the Family and Marriage Society of South Africa) social workers who specialise in marriage counselling. The feedback received added to the trustworthiness of the study and also facilitated an exploration of the implications for marriage counselling.

The FAMSA social workers challenged the judgemental aspects of traditional helping and stressed that the social worker needs to rather facilitate change. As social workers

therefore, we need to be familiar with both traditional African world views and values, and to appreciate how these values may be used in practice. Best practice guidelines were thus developed to include these traditional Zulu values.

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## **GLOSSARY OF RITUALS/PROCESSES**

**Imbeleko** - introducing the child to all the ancestors.

**Umhlonyana / umgonqiswe** – first period, puberty ritual

**Umemulo** – coming of age ritual.

**Inhlawulo** – A fine, “damages” or reparation for making a woman pregnant prior to marriage

**iLobolo** – negotiation of the bride price or dowry

**Hlonipha** - respect

**Umembeso** – husband’s family bring gifts to thank the bride’s family for agreeing to the marriage.

**Umbondo** – the bride’s family bring groceries to the groom’s family to set the date.

**Umshado / umkhehlo** – the traditional wedding during which the bride is introduced to the groom’s ancestors.

**Umabo** – the bride’s gifts to the groom’s family – blankets, mats, etc.



## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY**

This study explores the beliefs, values, traditions and practices of marriage in contemporary Zulu society, and examines the implications for marriage counselling. In this chapter the context of the study is described, the theoretical framework is explored, the research questions, aim and objectives are presented, and the research methodology is summarized in order to highlight the value of this study.

#### **1.1 Background and context of research problem**

South Africa's history is one of colonisation and apartheid where traditional indigenous cultural beliefs and practices were marginalized and devalued by people of European origin, and social injustice and oppression were the norm. More recently, the influences of globalization, Western cultural practices, women's empowerment and the ideology of human rights have impacted on traditional African beliefs and practices regarding relationships (Sodi, Esere, Gichinga and Hove, 2010). Particularly since the change to a democratic political dispensation after the elections of 1994, South African society has undergone many rapid changes having been influenced by the beliefs and values of both developed and developing countries. It is a country of contrasts, due to its diverse geography and culture, and also through its heritage and lived experience (Morkel, 2011). Having transitioned peacefully to democracy, it heralded hope internationally, whilst simultaneously being afflicted by "crime and violence at family and political levels" (Kasiram and Oliphant, 2007:71). Crime statistics for KwaZulu-Natal are of concern in that there has been "an increase over the last year in crimes related to murder, attempted murder, assault, arson, stock theft, shoplifting, business robbery, truck hijacking, as well as drug related crimes" ([www.kznonline.gov.za](http://www.kznonline.gov.za) State of the province address, 2015).

In addition, Ojong and Sithole (2007) and Morkel (2011) mention, that despite South Africa's wealth of natural resources, it is characterized by acute socio-economic inequality. Poverty Trends in South Africa report released by Statistics SA (2014) is quoted by the SAInfo reporter which indicates that "the share of national consumption

between the richest and poorest remains stubbornly stagnant. The richest 20% of the population account for over 61% of consumption in 2011 (down from a high of 64% in 2006). Meanwhile, the bottom 20% see their share remaining fairly constant at below 4.5%."

South Africa has one of the most liberal constitutions in the world that enshrines gender equality and individual rights, yet simultaneously, the constitution also makes provision for tribal cultures and values (Williams, 2010; Rudwick and Shange, 2009). In South Africa at a national, provincial and community level, there are elected representatives who are voted for by the citizens. However, although not part of government, there are also traditional bodies of tribal chiefs and elders, with KwaZulu-Natal for example having an elected provincial premier, and a Zulu king, King Goodwill Zwelithini kaBhekuzulu. "KwaZulu-Natal is the only province with a monarchy specifically provided for in South Africa's Constitution" ([www.kznonline.gov.za](http://www.kznonline.gov.za)).

This research is located in KwaZulu-Natal. While it's the country's third-smallest province, taking up 7.7% of South Africa's land area, it has the second-largest population, with 10.3-million people living there in 2011, 20% of South Africa's population. The majority (77.8%) of the population is isiZulu speaking, whilst 13.2% speak English. Remnants of British colonialism and a mix of Zulu, Indian and Afrikaans traditions give the province a rich cultural diversity ([www.southafrica.info](http://www.southafrica.info)).

South Africa's growth had averaged 3.2% from 1994 to 2012, while the number of people in employment grew by approximately 60%, or 5.6-million people, between 1994 and 2013 (Ngwenya 2015). There has been an increase in the proportion of people living in formal housing from 64% in 1996 to 77% in 2011 (20 years review). However, unemployment in KwaZulu-Natal lies at 20,8%, and the percentage of people living below the food poverty line of R 318 per month rose from 25% to 28 % between 2010 and 2014 (Ngwenya 2015). KwaZulu-Natal is thus a densely populated province with a lot of poverty.

As a result of all these above mentioned contrasts, there may be marked differences in values, beliefs and behaviour between generations within one family and between the

youth and the elders within the same community (Morkel, 2004). The meaning of marriage, its purpose, values and practices also differ widely in this country. Marriage in traditional pastoral societies in Africa and in Europe until the Industrial Revolution in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century was “primarily an economic and reproductive institution” (De Haas 1989:4), a way of increasing survival, social reproduction and kinship obligations (Padilla, Hirsch, Munoz-Laboy, Sember and Parker, 2007).

According to Wardlow and Hirsch (2006) there has been a global shift towards marital ideals characterized by emotional intimacy, companionship and mutual choice. In 19<sup>th</sup> Century Europe and North America demographic and economic factors such as urbanization, gains in life expectancy, wage labour, extended education and fewer children enabled conditions where marriage was increasingly viewed as an opportunity for self-actualisation and pleasure (Padilla et al, 2007). In South Africa these demographic and economic factors are also now playing a more dominant role in marital and family life. Wardlow & Hirsch (2006) describe how young people in various cultures across the world are deliberately emphasizing affective bonds in their relationships in contrast to the relationships of their parents.

Although in several of these cultures, there is still a strong emphasis on kinship obligations and responsibilities, the young people are changing this emphasis during their courtship. They are stressing romantic attraction and individual choice during their dating period. However as Wardlow & Hirsch (2006) state, it is one thing to emphasize romantic love during courtship, it is another to maintain it during marriage. Therefore it may also be relevant to explore whether this emphasis on love and emotional intimacy during courtship continues to be stressed throughout the marriage, or if socio-economic and kinship factors grow to be more meaningful as a consequence of the deeply ingrained cultural background.

The context of this research therefore is that South Africa is a land of contrasts and differences at many levels where, ideally, many different ways of living and of being are respected, valued and celebrated; yet practically many of the indigenous beliefs, values and practices are still being marginalized (Ross, 2010). This impacts and influences the access to help for indigenous people with their marriages. Akinyela (2002:33) describes this at a global level where current African life “is dominated by

European ethics and values that shape social policy, spiritual life, and political and economic processes.”

## **1.2 Theoretical framework**

It is important to understand the underlying philosophy of a particular study in order to understand the beliefs and values to which the researcher subscribes and appreciate the findings of a study accordingly.

This research is located within a social constructionist framework. This framework places its emphasis on social interpretation, and the influence of language, family and culture, and focuses on “how people interact with each other to construct, modify and maintain what their society holds to be true, real and meaningful” (Friedman and Coombs, 1996:27).

Ludwig Wittgenstein has been described as one of the most influential philosophers of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century (Klagge, 2001). He was my grandmother’s uncle, and therefore his life and ideas have been discussed within my family, resulting in my being interested and aware of his work. In my opinion, some of Wittgenstein’s philosophy was the precursor to social constructionism. Wittgenstein initially studied engineering, but became interested in Bertrand Russell’s *The Principles of Mathematics* which examines mathematics and logic. Wittgenstein expanded on Russell by trying to describe and understand the underlying deep structure of thinking and language: logical atomism – a science of meanings. By “showing the application of modern logic to metaphysics, via language, he provided new insights into the relations between world, thought and language and thereby into the nature of philosophy” (Anat and Anat, 2009: 1).

Wittgenstein wrote, and re-wrote his book *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1922) (Anat and Anat 2009, Monk 1991). It was written in an unusual manner – he structured it around seven numbered basic propositions which are elaborated by decimal expansions. It is extremely difficult to understand – in fact Wittgenstein’s philosophy is sometimes used as a metaphor for extremely complicated thoughts.

Anat and Anat (2009) suggested that in this book, Wittgenstein saw the world as consisting of facts which are states of affairs which in turn are combinations of objects. Objects have various logical properties and relationships to each other, and are either actual and in existence, or are possible. In this book, Wittgenstein clarified therefore between what can be said using words, and what can only be shown; that thoughts and propositions are pictures made up of several elements, and “the picture is a model of reality”. He differentiated between what is sense, what is senseless, and what is nonsense. Some interpreters describe this work as the basis of logical positivism and of realism (Anat and Anat, 2009:7).

Wittgenstein left philosophy for a few years, but as a very critical thinker, even of his own work, and of others, he returned to philosophy a few years later to challenge some of his own original thinking, although some writers suggested that he really expanded his original thinking (Monk 1991). He wrote *Philosophical Investigations* which was published posthumously in 1953. During this period one of his ideas was to use two metaphors to look at the issue of language, the world and thinking – the first was the use of language games. He never defined what he meant specifically with this term (Xanthos, 2006) and used it in three different ways – firstly how language ordinarily functions, secondly he relates it to children’s language-learning games, and thirdly to semiotic practices – “the socially shared ways of using signs, of signifying and of representing” (Xanthos, 2006:1).

It is this third way that is of particular interest to me and to my study. He used this concept to explore whether or not certain words have a universal unequivocal underlying meaning that anyone and everyone would understand; or whether there is some form of “family resemblance” to these words. Wittgenstein suggested that when investigating the underlying meaning of words, the philosopher needs to ‘look and see’ the variety of uses to which the word is put – ‘don’t think but look!’” (Anat and Anat, 2009:11). Wittgenstein’s search for the common underlying factors of words found that what links words is the underlying human need or situation that they relate to, and the broader the need, the more variation in form; and the more specific the need, the more specific the form (Khatchadourian, 1966). As a result, Wittgenstein indicated that for an utterance to be meaningful, it must be able to be subjected to certain public standards of correctness – it is impossible for a person to have a

completely private language with no rules or meaning in order to be understood. Thus grammar expresses the norms for meaningful language – the essence – and is not just technical instructions on how to use words. However, grammar is not abstract but it is situated within the activity of language; and occurs not just in definitions but also in judgements; and not agreements in opinions but “in forms of life” (Anat and Anat, 2009:13).

Two important aspects of forms of life are described – firstly they are changing, dependant on culture, context and history. “When a person says something what he or she means depends not only on what is said but also on the context in which it is said. Importance, point, meaning are given by the surroundings. Words, gestures, expressions come alive, as it were, only within a language game, a culture, a form of life.” (Richter, 2015: page unknown)

Secondly forms of life are the common behaviours of humankind which is the system of reference by which means we interpret an unknown language, or when we interpret an unknown culture. Hosking and Morley (2004:320) suggest that Wittgenstein’s observations are not new and may be similar to Vico, an 18<sup>th</sup> Century critic of the Enlightenment, whom they summarise as saying “to understand human history we need to understand cultural change. To understand cultural change we need to understand forms of life. Forms of life are explicable solely in terms of certain purposive activities”.

As Wittgenstein explored the definition of the word “games” for example which stretched from board games, to card games, to children’s play, to sport and the Olympic Games, he suggested that there is a wide range of possibility of meaning, and it is the context of the communication that gives us clarity about its meaning. As Widdershoven (1992) mentions, Wittgenstein suggests the activities of people from another culture may be different, but they have logic and meaning to those people and therefore they are understandable to an outsider once the context is understood. Therefore “Wittgenstein suggests that we step outside of our language games, enough to understand what we are constructing” (Kavanagh, 2010:244). We need to realise that the meaning is different to different people. Wittgenstein used the metaphor of family resemblance to show that a language – vocabulary and grammar - has to have

sufficient commonalities for people to understand one another and for someone to learn a new language, yet at the same time there are differences in the meaning of the words and in the rules of grammar that are only given meaning within the social context.

Wittgenstein used his own photographs of himself and his three sisters to illustrate this concept – see below. The four separate photographs illustrate the idea that when words have no common factors, they are wholly separate and meaningless; yet the composite photograph of all the faces shows that there needs to be a certain overlap for different people to see that there is a family resemblance between all four siblings. However, the formation of this particular composite was made at the discretion of Wittgenstein himself. Another person may have chosen different features of the siblings to form a different composite, yet there would still be a family resemblance. In my opinion this is a very strong metaphor that illustrates social constructionism very effectively, and so this explanation is relevant to the theoretical framework of my study.

**Photograph 1:** Wittgenstein and his three sisters – the components of the composite photo





**Photograph 2:** Composite photo

This was based on a technique invented by Galton and was made by Wittgenstein with the assistance of Nähr in the 1920s, and from this experiment he later formed the central ideas of *Philosophical Investigations* (Nedo, 2011).



Bambrough (1966) therefore suggests that Wittgenstein's philosophy of language goes beyond the nominalists' view that the naming is the core of language, whilst at the same time the realists' stress on form is insufficient to explain the complexity of language. Thus in my opinion, Wittgenstein's emphasis on the dynamic relationship between the meaning of language and the social context leads to the ideas and concepts of social constructionism.

Burr (2003) also used the metaphor of family resemblance to define the concept of social constructionism, as she says there are a variety of writers whose ideas have the characteristics mentioned below which she suggests describe social constructionism. Social constructionism stresses that we need to "take a critical stance towards our "taken-for-granted ways of understanding the world, including ourselves" (Burr, 2003:2). It emphasizes that we cannot assume that the nature of the world can be understood only through observation, but need to be aware that the categories to

which we assign certain aspects of the world may be the result of normative prescriptions in a culture: “The ways in which we commonly understand the world, the categories and concepts we use, are historically and culturally specific” (Burr, 2003:3). As a result they are relative, as not only are they specific to that culture or time, but they are also the product of that culture and time.

It is impossible to know objective reality, as all we can do is interpret our experience of reality. There are many possibilities for how any given experience may be interpreted, but no interpretation is “really” true. The same “facts” may be retold from very different points of view, so they have very different meanings. We communicate and constitute our version of realities through language, and so realities are organized and maintained through interaction. As a result, there is a “reflexivity in understanding and meaning making” (Rodwell, 1998:19). It is in language that societies construct their view of reality, as language is an interactive process. In order therefore to understand the meaning an experience has for a person, it is also therefore necessary to be aware of their culture and their social context. People make sense of their lives through stories, both the socio-cultural narratives they are born into, and/or grow up in; and the personal narratives they construct in relation to the socio-cultural narratives.

Burr (2003) described two aspects of social constructionism – micro and macro constructionism. In micro social constructionism the focus is on the individual who is seen to build his/her own accounts of events through language, which develops the meaning they give to these events – examples of this are the constructivists and discursive psychology. In macro social constructionism the constructive power of language is acknowledged, but it is seen as related to social structures, social relations and institutionalised practices, and the concept of power is seen as central to this type of theory. Thus, for example, where in mainstream psychology the therapist explores the person’s internal state, their attitudes, opinions and emotions, when using social constructionism these are viewed as arising out of the concept of identity that are “socially bestowed rather than essences of the person ....and that are constructed out of discourses that are culturally available to us” (Burr, 2003:106).

Each person's identity is constructed from an interweaving of several threads of cultural discourses – of age, race, gender, education, sexuality, ethnicity, occupation, physically abled/disabled. Campbell (1999:77) stresses that social constructionism “encourages family therapists to see clinical ‘realities’ such as diagnostic labels, concepts of ‘self’, and family roles as the products of social interaction across many levels from the cultural and societal down to the familial and individual”. Within these discourses, people hold subject positions for example the person with medical training in the medical discourse will be viewed as the person with the power to make diagnoses, take decisions and use the medical terminology, whilst those who consult him/her will be viewed as the patient who has less power and who receives and obeys the decisions. Therefore, when in interaction with another person or persons, an individual can offer, accept, claim or resist any particular subject position, moment by moment if necessary, and according to social constructionists, these “define us as persons” (Burr, 2003:114).

However, the criticisms that Burr has about constructionism, are that these positions mentioned above do not explain the emotional investments people have to their positions, the individual differences that people occupying the same position may have, and why individuals may occupy disadvantageous positions. Nor in fact does the concept of positioning explain the subjectivity and beliefs, values, motivations – the “self” of the individual.

In my opinion, social constructionism, both micro and macro, and psychological theories and humanistic concepts of the self are not two extremes of a dichotomy with the person on one end and society on the other, but in my view it is recursive. Burr (2003) describes Berger and Luckman's suggestion that three aspects – externalisation; objectivation and internalisation occur, when firstly we attach meanings to external symbols, which we then use or describe as objects in other places and at other times, and finally these meanings are internalised and therefore can be passed on to future generations through socialisation. Burr (2003) also describes Sampson's suggestion that the unit of analysis is not either the individual or society, but that it is the ecosystem that includes both the individual and society. Both these suggestions are inclusive, and in my opinion and in my experience, it is

extremely important not to analyse only the person, or only the society, but it makes more sense to be aware of both, and the recursive relationship between them.

In any culture, certain points of view and ways of being will come to be dominant over others. These dominant perspectives will specify the preferred and customary ways of believing and behaving within the particular culture. We tend to internalize the dominant norms and values of our culture, easily believing that they speak the truth of our identities. These dominant constructs tend to blind us to the possibilities that others might offer us. Whatever culture we belong to, has influenced us to ascribe certain meanings to particular life events and to treat others as relatively meaningless. Some cultures have colonized and oppressed others, and the concepts of the dominant culture are then imposed on people of the marginalized cultures. However, because society is interactive and reflexive, the marginalised culture will also influence the dominant culture. In fact, Akinyela (2002:34) suggests culture is “actually a complex of contentious and complimentary interactions between asymmetrical class, gender, religious, language, sexual and other social groups. Viewed from this perspective, culture is in a constant dialectical process of construction and reconstruction”.

When looking at any community, it is necessary to also look at the broader socio-political context, and what the dominant views of the time were, and how this honoured some views over others. Foucault (1984:175) writes “we should admit, rather, that power produces knowledge...that power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not pre-suppose and constitute at the same time power relations.” White and Epston (1990) discuss Foucault’s view of how power subjugates and conscripts people into activities that support the proliferation of knowledge as well the techniques of power. Therefore all of us are acting within and through a given field of knowledge/power; and that “since we are all caught up in a net or web of power/knowledge, it is not possible to act apart from this domain, and we are simultaneously undergoing the effects of power and exercising this power in relation to others” (White and Epston, 1990:22).

The idea that certain knowledges should be ascended over others is challenged - what alternative knowledges would they disqualify and what persons or groups are likely to

be diminished through doing this? Burr (2003) suggests that analyzing discourses allows people to understand their own experience and behaviour, and how these are linked to the social structures and practices of society in a way that makes the power relations of society more visible.

When looking at the history of colonialism and apartheid in this country and this province, where the use of traditional methods of healing have been marginalized (an example is the 1974 Health Act and its 1982 amendments) Foucault's view mentioned above is extremely important, and for this reason, the knowledges and meanings associated with marriage in traditional and contemporary Zulu society needs further exploration, as these alternative knowledges have been disqualified and dishonoured, thereby also diminishing the Zulu people.

The philosophy and ideas of social constructionism are of great value in this country as people are born into a socio-cultural context and through language and socialization, they learn to understand the norms and values of their particular family, community and culture. This then informs their view of reality, and "on shared meanings that could be said to reflect social constructions" (Williamson, 2006:85). With people in this country being born into such different cultures and contexts, everyone has a different experience of reality. This is captured in the following quote and illustrates why social constructionism has such relevance in this country.

"An ecosystemic, post-modernist, deconstructionist view presupposes that there is no one culture, no one worldview or reality, and no one 'correct' model of psychology. It is particularly important to understand this point in the South African context, where so many cultural and ethnic groups live side by side in an ever-changing ecology of ideas" (Becvar and Becvar, 1998:221).

It is therefore very important for social workers to understand their clients' experience of reality that gives meaning to their lives from the framework of each individual, and also in terms of the social constructs formed through the context of community and culture. Social constructionism therefore is the selected theoretical framework underpinning this research.

### **1.3 Research problem**

Ross (2010) indicates that many African clients prefer not to go for counselling within a Western model, where they may be expected to describe their individual personal problems, and particularly their feelings, in detail, a practice that may be in conflict with their traditional world view. The consequences of marginalizing or ignoring specific world views means that people going for help for their marital problems will feel misunderstood, and will avoid returning for ongoing assistance. With such rich cultural diversity and potentially different ways of viewing marriage in this country, it is important not to make assumptions based only on a Western view of relationships. South Africa lacks models and approaches that make professional relationship counselling more relevant and applicable for people from African backgrounds, and this impacts on the nature and appropriateness of social work intervention. To date, little research has been done to explore the meaning of marriage for couples who identify themselves as Zulu (hereafter termed Zulu couples) in order to offer best practices in professional marital counselling that are relevant and appropriate. Thus such alternative approaches need further exploration which this study strives to address.

### **1.4 Research questions**

1. What are the underlying values, beliefs, rituals and practices of marriage in contemporary Zulu society?
2. How do these Zulu values, beliefs, rituals and practices (traditional and contemporary) enhance marriage?
3. How do these Zulu values, beliefs, rituals and practices (traditional and contemporary) constrain or hurt marriage?
4. What route is generally followed to get help by Zulu couples experiencing marital problems?

5. Based on this information, what guidelines can be developed to provide a useful and relevant contribution to both the theory and the practice of professional marital counselling with Zulu couples?

### **1.5 Aim and objectives**

The overall aim of this research was to explore the meaning of marriage for couples who identified themselves as Zulu (hereafter termed Zulu couples), in order to offer best practice guidelines in professional marital counselling that are relevant and appropriate.

In order to achieve this, the objectives of the research were

- to determine and identify which values, customs, rituals and practices Zulu couples have found relevant during childhood, courtship, wedding and marriage, and how these give meaning to their relationship.
- to determine and identify which values, customs, rituals, and practices Zulu elders have found relevant in their own lives, and which they used when consulted by their family members for assistance with their marriage problems.
- to determine and identify which values, customs, rituals and practices Zulu social workers who work generically have found relevant in their own lives and how they use particular Zulu values and practices to assist their clients.
- Based on this information, to develop best practice guidelines in professional marriage counselling with Zulu couples with the assistance of specialized marriage counselors.

The research was divided into two phases. The first phase used in-depth interviews with three different samples in order to explore the meaning and practices of Zulu

marriage. The different samples consist firstly of Zulu couples; secondly of Zulu family elders who have given marital advice to family members; and thirdly of Zulu social workers who work generically. The second phase used this information as a base from which to determine guidelines for marriage counselling with the assistance of two groups of Zulu social workers who specialise in couple counselling.

## **1.6 Rationale for research methods**

The rationale for the methods used in this research study is briefly discussed in this introductory chapter. I later explain research methodology used in the study in detail in chapter four.

- **Overall approach**

Durrheim in Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2006) indicates that the researcher needs to link and connect the purpose of the research to the theoretical paradigm informing the research, whilst bearing in mind the context in which the research is to be carried out, as well as the specific research techniques to be used to collect and analyze the data. Design coherence ensures there is a logical flow between the rationale for the research, and the research methodology. The unit of analysis has to be clear so that there is no discrepancy when drawing conclusions. The researcher also needs to be aware of whether the research is exploratory, descriptive or explanatory, and whether it is basic or applied research (Durrheim 2006) as these also influence the format of the research design.

Fossey, Harvey, McDermott and Davidson (2002:717) explain that “qualitative research is a broad umbrella term for research methodologies that describe and explain person’s experiences, behaviours, interactions and social contexts without the use of statistical procedures or quantification.” Thus the paradigm of social constructionism, which is the theoretical base for this study, fits with qualitative research as both focus on people’s life experiences within their culture and social context; and the meaning that they ascribe to these experiences form the subject of this study. The meanings may be varied and multiple, so when using social



constructionist-based qualitative research, the researcher looks for a complexity of views (Creswall, 2007). This research is therefore qualitative research as it describes the participants' experiences and understanding of marriage and how they deal with their marital issues, within a particular context; and it also explores the potential actions and interventions that can be used as a result. Durrheim (2006) stresses that qualitative researchers prefer designs that are fluid and flexible, open and pragmatic. However he warns that this research framework is demanding as one constantly needs to refine and develop the research design throughout the process in order to obtain valid conclusions.

In-depth interviews were held with participants using an interview guide that aimed to explore certain themes. This results in verbal descriptions and explanations. It is an open-ended approach, starting with broad questions and areas of interest which are then refined and transformed through the research process, thereby becoming more focused.

- **Sampling, data collection and analysis**

Qualitative sampling's aim is to provide rich information, and so there are two main considerations – that of appropriateness, and of adequacy. The samples needed to complete all aspects of this research were purposive. Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest and Namey (2005) explain that purposive sampling occurs when participants are selected according to preselected criteria that are relevant to the particular research question. Participants need to be chosen so that they are the best people to provide the required information, and it needs to provide adequate sampling of the sources of information so that the research questions are addressed and a rich description is obtained (Fossey et al, 2002). Due to purposeful sampling providing a rich description of data, this enhances its transferability (Babbie and Mouton, 2001). In order to achieve the best possible sample, snowball sampling was used to source three samples as it was convenient and allowed the researcher to search for a wide variety of respondents for the first phase of the study.

The first sample of Zulu couples fitted with the basic criteria of being Zulu, over 21 years of age and married for at least two years; the second sample consisted of Zulu

family elders who had given marital advice to their family; whilst the third sample were Zulu social workers. Once the content of the interviews were analysed according to the themes identified, the social context was explored through the use of discourse analysis. Then for the second phase of the study these results were validated in two group discussions with FAMSA (the Family and Marriage Society of South Africa) social workers who specialise in marriage counselling, and then potential guidelines that were based on these results were identified.

## **1.7 Contribution of the study**

When examining the history of marital and family therapy in South Africa, Western therapeutic methods were predominantly studied and applied by most marital and family therapists. Although several therapists (for example Nell and Seedat, 1989; Henning, 1990; Lifshitz and van Niekerk, 1990; Mackintosh, 1990; Kasiram, 2000; Rankin and Rankin, 2000; Appelt, 2000) wrote about working with indigenous clients, and therefore adjusting their methods to this work, their underlying theoretical perspective was still based on Western ideology. Ross (2010:44) writes about the “over-reliance of South African social work on Western texts”, and “the need for indigenous social work education and practice”. Lifschitz (1989) stressed that we need to not only adjust our ways of working with indigenous clients, but we also need to adjust our world view, our ways of thinking, understanding, and our language so that our ways of healing are applicable to those people whose world view is not Western. He stressed that such alternative therapeutic procedures need to draw from both Western and African approaches in order to form a “hybrid” (1989:50).

This view challenges the alternative view that highlights issues of cultural competence – is it possible for a non-indigenous practitioner to be able to work appropriately and competently with indigenous couples? Should they in fact do so? Akinyela (2002) stresses that therapists from African traditions need to generate and identify culturally appropriate practices based on their own cultural and historical experiences as part of what he terms developing a “post-colonial therapy”. The Just Therapy team in New Zealand responded to this challenge by using what they term a cultural consultant to work with the non-indigenous therapist in order to avoid misunderstandings, and to

explain nuances of meaning (Campbell, Waldegrave and Tamasese, 1995). This issue is also relevant where a non-indigenous person is researching cultural issues in an indigenous culture, as is occurring in this research.

In my opinion, it is not only possible but also necessary for practitioners in South Africa of all races and cultures to be able, and to be competent to work across racial divides. However they need to understand the variety of differences across the cultures and to realize that these are socially constructed.

This study is important as it explores the world view, beliefs and practices of contemporary Zulu married couples, family elders and social workers who have been influenced by colonialism, apartheid, and globalisation, examining not only the content of the themes described, but also analysing the context of the social discourses. This therefore provides new knowledge. It will also assist service delivery by producing guidelines for relevant, effective marriage counselling.

## **1.8 Definition and clarification of terms**

In this study the following terms are frequently used, and are defined as follows:

**Zulu couple:** In this study the couples were heterosexual , and so the definition of Zulu married couples include a man and a woman who define themselves as Zulu and who have been married by one or more of the accredited South African legal methods as follows:

**Civil marriages:** these are marriages registered according the Marriage Act, 1961. In the release of this Act, the term ‘civil’ is used to differentiate marriages that were solemnised by licensed lay marriage officers from marriages that were solemnised by religious marriage officers (Statistics PO307 25/03/2012).

**Customary marriages:** these are marriages that are negotiated, celebrated or concluded according to any of the systems of indigenous African customary law which exist in South Africa as described in the Recognition of Customary Marriages Act, 1998

(Statistics PO307 25/03/2012). It needs to be noted however, that customary marriages technically should have the marriage validated at the Department of Home Affairs. However, as a customary marriage is a process, and not everyone in this study completed the whole process, it was deemed applicable that if the couple had started the customary marriage process, were living together for at least two years, and defined themselves, and were viewed by the community as married, these research participants would be accepted as married for the purposes of this study.

Civil unions: refers to the voluntary union of two persons who are both 18 years of age or older, which is solemnised and registered by way of either a marriage or a civil partnership, in accordance with the procedures prescribed in the Civil Union Act, 2006 (Statistics PO307 25/03/2012)

Family elders are older people whose children or extended family have asked them for marriage advice.

## **1.9 Overview of the thesis**

This report of the research study includes a literature review that describes the Zulu world view as well as the Zulu traditional beliefs, customs, rituals and practices. It also examines Western and traditional marriage counselling. The methodology chapter explains the type of research, the sampling, the tools used and the research process of data collection. Reflexivity is explored, and ethical issues are also clarified. Limitations of the study are noted. The results chapter describes the data analysis using both thematic analysis as well as discourse analysis, and discusses the findings against the applicable literature. The final chapter draws conclusions from these results, looking at the recommendations within the parameters of the study.

## **1.10 Conclusion**

This chapter has introduced the topic of this study. The background and context have been explained. The theoretical framework of social constructionism that underpins the whole study has been explored. The research questions that need to be answered in order to fulfil the aims and objectives have been clarified, and an overview of the research methods has been undertaken. Finally, the importance of this study into contemporary Zulu married life and the resulting implications for marriage counselling have been highlighted.

In the following chapter the underlying philosophy of Zulu life, which is called *ubuntu*, will be explored and the cultural rituals, beliefs and values that pertain to marriage will be described.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **THE ZULU WORLD VIEW AND CULTURAL PRACTICES**

This chapter will present a critical discussion of the literature of some of the Zulu philosophies or world views, values and cultural practices in order to understand what these are, the meaning and purpose that are ascribed to them, and how they influence marital and family lives.

One of the consequences of being brought up as a white person, resident in South Africa during the apartheid regime, was that knowledge of and contact with other race groups was very limited. Even today, it is possible for the different race groups to have very little experience of each other's cultures. Over the years my contact with Zulu people was limited to informal socializing with colleagues, until my brother-in-law married a Zulu woman twenty years ago, and until I started running skills workshops for 4<sup>th</sup> year social workers. In both areas of my life, I started learning more about the Zulu culture from my sister-in-law and from my students. The impact of cultural differences on counselling became noticeable as many Zulu students at that time had commented that in their culture they were not allowed to verbalize their feelings, and so did not have the language to express empathy. I therefore researched and wrote a paper with a colleague on the use of empathy in social work counselling skills (Simpson and Haselau, 2006).

Therefore the purpose of this literature review was to gain knowledge about the traditional Zulu world view and philosophy and their cultural beliefs and practices about marriage and the family, as well as the critiques of these. For me this was important, as it links with my strong belief, as described in the previous chapter, that our social context influences the way we view, act and respond to the world. This knowledge could not only help when counselling Zulu couples, but helped guide my questions designing this research, the research interviews, and the process of analyzing and organizing the research results.

## **2.1 Culture, acculturation and enculturation**

The concept of culture is abstract and depends on the context in which it is used. The following definitions of culture are helpful in providing a basic understanding of the concept and the ways in which it is used in this study, and then the concept is explored further.

The definition of culture according to the World English Dictionary is “the total range of activities and ideas of a group of people with shared traditions, which are transmitted and reinforced by members of the group”. According to the Oxford English Dictionary culture is defined as “the behaviors and beliefs characteristic of a particular social, ethnic, or age group”. Culture may be defined as the vehicle in which values, principles, beliefs and behaviours are transmitted and manifested in organizations, communities and families through the use of language (Karsten and Illa, 2005).

Van Rooyen and Nqweni (2012:52) warn against assuming that everyone belonging to a particular culture will practice, believe and give meaning to it in an identical manner so they define culture “to refer to a set of subjective, uneven, complicated interactions between individuals and the manner in which they express their experiences. This means that although there may be commonly accepted narratives around specific aspects of existence, the individual may still incorporate these in idiosyncratic ways”.

Some cultures have colonized and oppressed others, and the concepts of the dominant culture are then imposed on people of the marginalized cultures. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Apartheid regime resulted in white Western people oppressing and dominating people of colour. However, because society is interactive and reflexive, the marginalized culture will also influence the dominant culture. Akinyela (2002:34) therefore suggests that culture is “actually a complex of contentious and complimentary interactions between asymmetrical class, gender, religious, language, sexual and other social groups. Viewed from this perspective, culture is in a constant dialectical process of construction and reconstruction”: cultures change. Yoon, Chang, Kim, Clawson, Cleary, Hansen, Bruner, Chan and Gomes (2013:13) defined two

processes that occur in such situations: acculturation is the cultural socialization of a person from a marginalized culture to the mainstream culture, whereas enculturation is the retention of, or cultural socialization to one's culture of origin. These processes occur simultaneously in parallel. Berry (in Yoon et al 2013:16) described four possible strategies for acculturation:

- a) Integration – the maintenance of the culture of origin and the acquisition of the new culture.
- b) Assimilation – the acquisition of the new culture and the rejection of the culture of origin.
- c) Separation – the maintenance of the culture of origin and the rejection of the new culture.
- d) Marginalization – the rejection of both cultures.

When Yoon and his colleagues (2013) examined worldwide research relating to which strategies were constructive and which were destructive for individuals' mental health, they found that integrating bicultural identities is easier in societies such as the present South Africa, that endorse cultural diversity, and that adopt multicultural policies, as opposed to culturally closed societies. They also found that the integration of two cultures may be less conflicting for identity, behaviours and knowledge, whereas integrating different cultural values may be difficult e.g. it may be difficult to integrate values of individualism and values of collectivism; and it may be difficult to integrate values of autonomy and of filial piety. Thus Yoon et al (2013) suggest that in order to assist clients to develop bicultural competency, external acculturation is important so that the individual learns the dominant culture's language and behaviours in order to find employment and survive financially, and internal enculturation will give the person a sense of identity and belonging.

## **2.2. African world view**

‘A world view refers to the way in which a people make sense of their surroundings; make sense of life and of the universe’ (Ani, 1980:4 quoted by Carroll, 2008). Therefore a cultural group's understanding of the universe (cosmology), nature of



being (ontology), values (axiology), and knowledge (epistemology) all contribute to the ways in which a people make sense of reality, i.e. their world view.

However the concept of world view is contentious. It emphasizes homogeneity of billions of people in whole continents, who come from different cultural backgrounds. The concept of world view cannot therefore be detailed and comprehensive enough to capture the complexities of the different African, European and Asian cultures. There are also differences in urbanization, class, tribal affiliation, religion and geographical location (Eagle 2005). The concept of world view also implies that culture and the view of the world that the people have is static, whereas it is flexible and constantly changing.

Carroll (2008) explored several authors' views of African and Western world views and summarises their differences as follows:

When examining the African world view, mind, body and spirit are seen as one, and no distinction is made between physical and psychosocial problems - it is what Bakker and Snyders (1999) term holistic and integrative, and views life from a communalistic rather than an individualistic viewpoint. As Nwoye (2015:15) stresses, it is "holistic in depth and range"; whereas the Western view of the world sees a separation of parts with clear boundaries. In the African cosmology, the universe is interconnected, integrated and interdependent. As Nwoye (2015:14) indicates it is "a universe of multiple realities (natural, abstract and spiritual) in close proximity and complicated transactions with one another" in contrast to the Western world view of the universe as independent and separate. In African cosmology, human beings are part of a holistic system that includes relationships with nature, with human social networks and the supernatural (Eagle, 2005). An African ontology views reality as mainly spirit with some material manifestations whereas in the Western view, reality is mainly materialistic, based on what can be understood using the five senses. The African world view values communality and interpersonal relationships in the group, whereas the Western view is based on the individual within the group.

As a result of these contrasts between the African world view and the Western world view "social reality is not only lived differently, but also understood differently"

(Carroll, 2008:260). As a result of one's life's philosophy and practices evolving through socialization within a particular culture and world view, these may be so taken for granted that one is unaware that one subscribes to them, and that they are socially constructed. It is only when they are deconstructed that one is aware that there are alternative possibilities.

### **2.2.1 African culture**

It is important when investigating a particular culture to examine the people's values, beliefs, behaviour and ritualistic practices. When looking at African culture in more detail, Darley and Blankson (2008) examined the literature on indigenous African people's culture who lived south of the Sahara, using Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961) value orientation theory, as well as Hofstede's (1980) four cultural dimensions. These theoretical views were chosen by Darley and Blankson as they are foundational in understanding cultural patterns, are widely used and are stable across studies.

Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961) as quoted by Darley and Blankson (2008) describe five cultural orientations common to all human groups: 1. human nature orientation; 2. man and nature orientation; 3. time orientation; 4. relational orientation; and 5. activity orientation. Hofstede (1980) uses four dimensions of power distance, individualism-collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, and masculinity-femininity. Bearing in mind Darley and Blankson's (2008) three caveats that firstly these cultural categorisations may not be detailed and comprehensive enough to capture the complexities of African culture, nor secondly have they been empirically tested, and thirdly the shift from rural to urban living may influence traditional cultural practices, they were able to suggest a summary of African culture as follows:

The African is seen as good when his/her actions conform to the local customs. The African person must live in harmony with the universe – “obeying the natural, moral and mystical order” (Darley and Blankson, 2008:378), and therefore religion is central to all areas of his/her life. The African takes a circular as opposed to a linear view of

time, where the past and the present are more important than the future, and time is used for social obligations, so this takes priority over using time for other activities. Another very important aspect of African society is the respect for elders, within the context of community. The cognitive style is that of synthesis with a high degree of harmony, and there is a strong use of symbols in the thinking. Darley and Blankson (2008) suggest that African communities have a high power distance with a strong degree of hierarchy, with a preference for structure and routine. African culture is communal, and the interests of the group take precedence over the rights of the individual, and so they value social relevance and the welfare of others. Finally there is a strong acknowledgement of the preservation of customs and rituals (2008).

Wilson and Williams (2013) suggest that individuals who comply with their culture of origin's world view can positively impact mental health. They mention that African-Americans have maintained core values similar to *ubuntu*: humanness, caring, sharing, respect and compassion. They stress that Americans of African descent experience positive mental health through feelings of connectedness, social competence and group consciousness; as opposed to Americans of European descent who experience positive mental health through individuation, self competence and personal consciousness.

### **2.2.2 Communalism – *Ubuntu***

When investigating what *ubuntu* is, Gade (2012) identified two aspects to the term – the first defines *ubuntu* as a moral quality of a person, whilst the second is described as a phenomenon, a philosophy, or a world view. So the Zulu concept of *ubuntu* is the dominant underlying philosophy of the Zulu people's morals and ethics. Nyaumwe and Mkabele (2007:152) indicate that *ubuntu* “is premised on the reciprocal belief that an individual's humanity is expressed through the personal relationships with others in a community and in turn other people in that community recognize the individual's humanity”. It emphasizes collective identity, solidarity, caring and sharing, the connection between the physical and the meta-physical world, and the importance of interpersonal relationships. *Ubuntu* is a philosophy that many African tribes adhere

to. There are variations of it throughout Africa, particularly in Eastern, Central and Southern Africa (Murithi, 2009; Gade, 2012).

In his exploration of written information about *ubuntu* Gade (2011) found that a similar concept was mentioned in the 1960's when several African states became independent and were describing a political "narrative of return" back to pre-colonial days. However, according to Gade (2011) it was only in 1995 that Schutte linked *ubuntu* in the Nguni languages, of which the Zulu are the largest population group, to the proverb *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*. The specific translation of this is "a human being is a human being because of other human beings". It is called *botho* in Sotho: *motho ke motho ka batho*. Letseka (2012) describes how the concept of social interdependence is central to the translation that he prefers "I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore I am". Krog (2008:212) translates it as "a person is a person through other persons", and suggests two aspects to it: the first is the stress on interconnectedness, and the second that flows from this, is the idea that this interconnectedness enables the release of the full potential of the wholeness of both the community, and the individuals that make up the community, thus empowering both the individual and the community (2008:207). She stresses that the terms interconnectedness and wholeness are not just theoretical concepts, but that it means both a mental and physical experience of the process of becoming that everybody and everything is moving towards its fullest and its best, but "which can only be reached through and with others which include ancestors and the cosmos" (2008:208).

Murithi (2009: 227) in his discussion on Tutu's (1999) view of *ubuntu* mentions "As human beings whose identity is defined through interactions with other human beings, it follows that what we do to others eventually feeds through the interwoven fabric of social, economic, and political relationships to impact upon us as well". Krog describes how several critics of the process of the TRC hearings have challenged the Christianity concept of forgiveness, which in their view, was imposed on the victims by Archbishop Desmond Tutu. Krog (2008) disagrees with this, and suggests that it was not so much the rhetoric of forgiveness that allowed the TRC to move forward, but that it was the spiritual concept of reciprocity of *ubuntu* that Tutu also stressed. In a very moving description, Krog (2008:213) describes how during the T.R.C. hearings, Cynthia Ngewu, the mother of Christopher Piet who was killed by

security police in 1987, says “This thing called reconciliation...if I am understanding it correctly... if it means this perpetrator, this man who has killed Christopher Piet, if it means he becomes human again, this man, so that I, so that all of us, get our humanity back.....then I agree, then I support it all.”

In examining the concept of *ubuntu* as acknowledging one’s humanity, Krog (2008) quotes Gobodo-Madikizela (2003:124, 2003:117), a psychologist and a TRC appointed member who also stresses that “we are a society of people and not of ideas, a fragile web of interdependent humans, not of stances” and “If remorse and asking forgiveness comes, it transforms the image of the victim as object, to the victim as human. The victim now becomes the gatekeeper to what the outcast desires: namely readmission into the human community”. Although Krog (2008) acknowledges that the absence of revenge in the TRC hearings was in part informed by ideas of Christian forgiveness, restorative justice and of human rights, she feels that the daily living of *ubuntu* was both the foundation and the “determining factor” in enabling the TRC to work.

The lived experience of the process of inter-connectedness and wholeness that Krog uses to describe *ubuntu* illustrates the complexity of the concept. The nuances of *ubuntu* can be extremely difficult to understand if one has not experienced it. It is mentioned in the epilogue of the South African Constitution (Gade, 2012), although some writers such as Keevy (2009) have criticised the feasibility for the Constitution to enshrine individual rights and responsibility, yet also to uphold traditional communal cultural values. However Mabovula (2011) challenges this by suggesting that in fact with its emphasis on humanism, tolerance and respect, *ubuntu* is one of the building blocks of the constitution, in particular of the Bill of Rights. *Ubuntu* is also being used a great deal in Peace Education (Murithi, 2009), and in mediation and reconciliation work because of the stress on humaneness and reciprocity.

Poovan, du Toit and Engelbrecht (2006) use Mbigi’s (1997) description of five social values of *ubuntu*. The first occurs when African people helped one another, pooled their resources and “through a shared will and collaborative spirit” have been able to survive extreme hardship (Poovan, et al., 2006:18). The second linked value, is a spirit of solidarity both between community members and within the family. Thus a

person is identified through his/her community rather than through individual personality; the interpersonal and biological bonds of solidarity are expressed constantly in everyday life both practically as well as spiritually. Compassion is an important social value of *ubuntu*, where from early in life the African person is taught that as every person is connected, everyone needs to take care of, help and be responsible for others, without expecting anything in return. As Poovan, et al. (2006) indicate the fourth value is that of respect – *ukuhlonipha* - which is one of the building blocks of the community as it delegates the position of the person within the hierarchical society. Dignity is the fifth value, and arises from and reinforces respect. Through offering respect to the elders and people in authority, these members become dignified.

According to Eze (2008) some political writers equate ubuntu to “*simunye*” – “we are one” – but he challenges this as in his opinion *simunye* implies a consensus and a static possession. The term *simunye* does not illustrate the reciprocity that is a very important and strong aspect of *ubuntu*, as described above.

Another aspect of communalism occurs at an *indaba* or communal meeting where issues are discussed until consensus is reached. Issues are negotiated through discussions by people who are part of the social hierarchy defined by age, traditional roles and expertise in different areas that characterize communal activities, until consensus is reached. Conclusions negotiated at an *indaba* are upheld by both those who attended and by those who were not present, whether or not their individual opinions concurred or differed to those of the *indaba*, because of the concept of *ubuntu* (Nyaumwe and Mkabela 2007). However the criticism of this is that consensus “does not give an adequate account of the praxis of common good in African Communitarianism. Consensus absorbs multiple viewpoints through a totalitarian uniformity” (Eze, 2008:386). He feels that consensus does not accommodate autonomy but suppresses these core values of human identity.

Sulamoyo (2010) warns that the collectivism used in *ubuntu* is very complex, bearing in mind that an individual’s identity is based on the identity of the collective group, and particularly when one considers that African societies have complex divisions based on tribal, religious, ethnic and clan lines. Part of the collectivist aspect of

African society that promotes consensus and agreement also results in people who are loyal to their leaders even when this loyalty may foster inequity. The African society is grounded in tradition and order, and therefore, according to Sulamoyo (2010), risk-taking was seen as challenging the leadership and the local traditions. As Mokgoro (1998) indicates, *ubuntu* results in group solidarity and conformity, as well as compassion, co-operation, concern, respect and collective unity.

Since 1994, McDonald (2010:139) describes how *ubuntu* has been used by the State, by NGO's, by the private sector, academics and many professions – “from the development of jurisprudence to the promotion of the 2010 FIFA World Cup” - as a means of redressing the inequalities of the apartheid and revitalizing South Africa. Thus for example *ubuntu* is being used in education, in health, in law, in labour management and in social work. In fact as Matolino and Kwindigwi (2013) mention, there are even security firms, computer firms, education funds and others who are using *ubuntu* as their name. There is even Ubuntu – The Opera (2015). *Ubuntu* is also used by management (Mangaliso, 2001; Karsten and Illa, 2005; McDonald 2010). Just as South Africa needed to change politically after 1994, so did the South African business community, and so to attain this transformation, the interconnectedness of community as understood in *ubuntu* was used. Karsten and Illa stress that *ubuntu* was “intended to be more than just a popular version of an employee assistance programme defined by the interest of management” (2005:613) and to encourage their workers to be loyal to their particular corporation or product. This management style was intended to foster open conversations so that the voices of all the participants in the organization could be heard and that consensus could be reached.

However, although there might be an element of consensus as all participants are working towards a similar goal or product, and there may be an element of reciprocity in providing a good salary, medical aid insurance, pension and other benefits, there is such a discrepancy between management and workers' benefits in most businesses that, in my view, the concept of *ubuntu* is being prostituted. I agree with McDonald when he says that “the philosophical underpinnings of *ubuntu* are fundamentally at odds with the market agenda of *ubuntu* capitalists, with irreconcilable differences between the stated communalism of *ubuntu* and the individualized and commodified life-worlds of capitalism” (2010:140).

The concept of *ubuntu* is used extensively in social work. The South African Governmental White Paper on Welfare (1997) officially recognises *Ubuntu* as: "The principle of caring for each other's well-being...and a spirit of mutual support...Each individual's humanity is ideally expressed through his or her relationship with others and theirs in turn through a recognition of the individual's humanity. *Ubuntu* means that people are people through other people. It also acknowledges both the rights and the responsibilities of every citizen in promoting individual and societal well-being" (Republic of South Africa, White paper for Social Welfare, 1997: 18). Another example of its use in social work is the comparison of *ubuntu* with the Person Centred Approach, and in fact UNISA Social Work Department included it in their Group Work guide.

Various traditional Zulu practices such as *umemulo* (the coming of age ceremony particularly for women (Magwaza, 2008), *ilobolo* (bride price or dowry) and *ukuhlonipha* (practices of respect) highlight the communal, reciprocal nature of relationships. However, Western feminists may challenge this by suggesting that although technically there is reciprocity, it is unbalanced due to the difference in power between men and women, and between the youth and the elders in such a structured patriarchy. Roberts (2010) has described how feminist writers have criticised *ubuntu* as upholding patriarchal practices, and suggests that further dialogue and debate needs to occur, particularly in the areas of patriarchy; gender and race; the various gender roles in an *ubuntu* religious and cultural practice; *ubuntu* and gender violence; and *ubuntu* and the status of women in socio-economic and socio-political activities (Roberts 2010).

Although as seen above, *ubuntu* is used broadly and extensively, it is important to remember that the practices vary across time and space, and as a cultural practice, they are constantly evolving and changing (McDonald, 2010).



#### 2.2.4 Social identity and cultural practices

According to Ross (2010) and Ramokgopa (2001) most African cultures define the stages of identity according to the individual's ability to perform societal tasks. Social responsibility is valued more highly than individual autonomy: "obligations/expectations and privileges are taken as being linked to occupancy of social positions. Harmony and peace result when people occupying such positions perform their expected roles creditably, while disharmony and distress result when the opposite is the case" (Nwoye, 2000:2).

One of the recent issues is the change in both men and women's roles. "Tensions around gender equality are also due to the urban-rural and modernist-traditionalist dichotomy and intra-ethnic difference and division" (Rudwick and Shange, 2009:67). In the past a male patriarch would be the head of the domestic hierarchy with his senior wives and other senior men occupying the level below, whilst the junior wives and junior men were below that, and the base of this social pyramid was occupied by the youth and the children (Marcus, 2008:537).

Changes in cultural practices have occurred over time. Hunter (2008:566) describes how in the past young Zulu men would aspire to build a home through marriage - *ukwakha umuzi*, thereby becoming the respected head of the household and supporting several wives in his homestead or *umuzi*. However, colonialism, forced labour migration and capitalism, gender and generational conflicts all served to undermine this practice. Hunter describes how unemployment and social inequality has resulted in major economic consequences that has resulted firstly in marital rates decreasing as Zulu men are unable to accumulate enough wealth to pay *ilobolo* (bride wealth), start their lives as husbands and establish their own *umuzi*; and secondly as women enter the work force in order to provide for their children, and material transactions such as gifts of cell phones and designer clothes from boyfriend to girlfriend have grown, Hunter (2008:576) suggests that many Zulu men "have shifted from acting as providers in the marriage to providers outside the marriage". Marcus (2008:540) concurs with this, describing how the high cost of customary obligations

like *ilobolo* result in people either marrying late or not marrying at all, so “isiZulu-speaking women girls and women use intimacy, not virginity as a way to get things they desire from men”. Posel, Rudwick and Casale (2011:106) agree with this viewpoint and expand on it. They describe how the original purpose of *ilobolo* was related to women’s “reproductive labour” and to create a relationship and a bond, which are reciprocal, between the bride and the groom’s families that continues beyond the death of either individual partner.

In the past *ilobolo* was always paid in cattle and the amount varied and needed to be negotiated by both families. As the purpose was to form a long-term bond between two families, sometimes the father of the groom would also contribute, and often the payment occurred over a period of time in installments, even sometimes after the birth of the first child. *Ilobolo* was linked with transferring rights to the children born of the marital union, and had socio-cultural and spiritual functions as there are connections between cattle and ancestral spirits and lineage (Posel et al, 2011:106). Dlamini (1985) denies the idea that suggests *ilobolo* compensates the parents for the expense of raising their daughter, or to settle debts, but suggests it is part of cultural pride. Another function that he suggests is to delay the marriage until the couple are mature enough to understand and be able to fulfill marriage’s responsibilities. However, over time the value of *ilobolo* grew, so young men could not afford to marry, whilst older men could use their wealth for polygamous marriages. As a result Shepstone, the Natal Secretary for Native Affairs in 1869 formalised the amount of cattle to be paid : 10 cattle for commoners which went to the bride’s male kin, plus the *ingquto* beast that went to her mother and represents the daughter’s virginity (Posel, Rudwick and Casale, 2011).

Although the intended purpose was to make marriage easier, it had the result of undermining the indeterminate aspect of the negotiations and the reciprocal passing of gifts between the two families, and was seen as economic. The commercial aspect has increased over the years especially when cash was substituted for cows. However, this did allow for an opening for negotiations as to what the cattle are worth. In order to pay *ilobolo* the bridegroom’s family needs to secure consent from the woman’s father by opening negotiations with *ukukhonga*. Further negotiations were encouraged with the advent of the *imvulamlo* or mouth-opener ceremony – a gift from the groom to

the bride's father in order to decrease the amount of *ilobolo*. The migrant labour system gave young men cash so they were able to negotiate and pay *ilobolo*, but this encouraged individualization of *ilobolo*, as the young groom had to bear the costs alone without the assistance of his father (Posel, et al, 2011). During this time, love started to be linked to *ilobolo* – the women viewed *ilobolo* as a way of evaluating whether the man could provide for his family, and whether he was committed to her and the relationship. It also benefitted her family and so gave her a feeling of worth.

However, nowadays many women give birth to children before marriage. “Some men pay *inhlawulu* (the traditional payment for a child out of wedlock)” and then pay *ilobolo* in order to get married to the mother of the child, but many find it easier to claim traditional paternity by only paying *inhlawulu* (Posel, et al., 2011:108). As previously mentioned, in the past *ilobolo* could continue to be paid after the marriage, but nowadays most men pay it prior to marriage. Dlamini (1985) also describes that *ilobolo* operating in a money economy has resulted in the change that cash is being exchanged instead of cattle, but he denies that this is the cause of the breakdown of the extended family, but credits this to Westernisation and its emphasis on the nuclear family. Posel, et al. (2011) challenge this. Bearing the cost of *ilobolo* in mind, and the high rate of unemployment among African men, weddings are not common. In fact Posel, et al., (2011) uses information from the 2005 South African Social Attitudes Survey to illustrate that nearly half of the people surveyed saw the high cost of *ilobolo* as the main reason for young people not getting married. However this does not indicate that they rejected the practice of *ilobolo* – they do not go and get married legally without paying *ilobolo* - in fact “on the contrary, it is perhaps precisely because the custom is so widely valued and resilient that high *ilobolo* payments would reduce the prospects of marriage” (2011:109).

Legally, the Recognition of Customary Marriages Act does not make the “tendering of *ilobolo* a requirement for the conclusion of a valid customary marriage” (Nkosi, 2013), but he suggests that there must be negotiations and agreement concerning payment in part or in full, and that *ilobolo* is the most important factor that differentiates a customary marriage from co-habitation. Nkosi stresses that *ilobolo* is not a purchase-and-sale transaction (2013:37), and, as it is not necessary in order for a customary marriage to be legally recognised, the issue of repayment or refund on

divorce is not necessary. However the *ilobolo* can be forfeited. He suggests that the purpose of *ilobolo* is to legitimize the children; another suggestion is that it is a token of appreciation from the groom's family to the bride's family for raising their daughter. The function that both Dlamini (1985) and Nkosi (2013) agree on is that it is a public recognition of the wife's transfer from her family to the groom's family, giving him marital rights over her, and parental rights over their children. Therefore paying *ilobolo* and the prospect of forfeiting *ilobolo* would deter the man from divorcing impulsively, and the return of the *ilobolo* by her father would prevent the bride from ending the marriage.

According to the Recognition of Customary Marriages Act, a customary marriage dissolution occurs like a civil divorce. The problem with this is that a customary marriage is not only a bond between two individuals, but the "marriage relationship had a collective or communal substance. Procreation and survival were important goals of this type of marriage and indispensable for the well-being of the larger group" (Nkosi, 2013:39). A customary marriage is a merging of two whole families both living and dead. A customary marriage could only be dissolved by the death of the husband, unless, with the woman's acceptance, she was transferred to her husband's brother – *ukugenwa*. If, whilst the husband was alive, he ill-treated his wife or if she was unhappy, she could return to her father's home. Her husband therefore would have to fetch her (*phuthuma*) and pay a fine. If he did not do so, it was understood he no longer wanted the marriage. If however, she refused to return after he had paid the fine, or if her conduct gave rise to him rejecting her, or if her father dissolved the marriage, *ilobolo* or part thereof could be retained or refunded. If the husband did not have a valid reason for rejecting her, the bride's father could keep the *ilobolo*.

However the Recognition of Customary Marriages Act does not specify what happens to *ilobolo* at divorce of a customary marriage. "All customary law is a flexible, living system of law which develops over time to meet the changing needs of the community." (Nkosi 2013:39) so he suggests that the court would need to take into account the length of the marriage, the circumstances leading to the breakdown as well as any misconduct of either spouse in order to determine any claims for the retention or refund of *ilobolo*.

Leclerc-Madlala (2008 :559 and 560) describes other changes - “common views that women today are more sexually active than in the past, and that they often take the initiative to attract men and commence a sexual relationship, contribute to the perception of modern women as out of control.” She mentions how women are seen as competing and pursuing men (to *shela* – to propose love) instead of waiting and then choosing a man (to *qoma* – to choose a lover). Modern women are seen as assertive and behaving in a manner that is the opposite of proper feminine behaviour. She describes how traditionally “the image of a demure, soft-spoken girl who serves her family, and then grows up to serve her husband, her children, and her in-laws represents an ideal type of femininity.” A young woman needs to be prepared to live a life of “muted wifehood”, where obedience to her husband’s wishes forbids any “back-chat” to him or his family. The female coming-of-age ritual described by Magwaza (2008) called *umemulo*, which may also be called *ukuthomba*, a ‘blossoming forth’ of a girl into womanhood, informs the ancestors or *amadlozi* of the fact that the girl is nubile and ready to become a wife and mother, and in turn the *amadlozi* bless the girl with fertility. However, as Magwaza (2008:482) stresses, this ceremony is more than just a fertility ritual, but she learns from her peers and elders the obligations of deference expected of a married woman. Traditionally the girl is secluded in a special hut or *umgonqo* for a week where she stays with her female age-mates, so that the ancestors can recognize and contact her. She may only leave this hut at night, and she must not talk too much or talk or laugh loudly, and if outside the hut, must act shyly in accordance with the rules of respect, deference and avoidance that reflect gender and generational divisions called *ukuhlonipha*. These and other rituals prepare her for the reality of adulthood – “not being able to consume sour milk, having to exhibit great deference every day, and generally being separated from natal kin”(2008:487). During the *umemulo* day, there are initially several rituals the girl partakes with her father, following which other rituals, the slaughtering of livestock, speeches, singing, and dancing celebrate the girl’s ancestors, kinship and family. Only the girls perform dances but the audience contains both men and women. Zondi (2012:199) examines the songs that occur during the *umemulo* and stresses that not only are they for entertainment, but “concurrent with offering enjoyment, the performance criticizes social customs or conveys an opinion.” Thus it is often through

song that messages and concerns that are difficult to discuss verbally due to the restrictions of *hlonipha* can be addressed.

Imber-Black (1989) defines rituals as tools that assist in the development and processing of meaning. He suggests that rituals have five themes which need to be taken into consideration. The first is membership – who belongs, where are the boundaries drawn; the second is healing, for example a funeral marks the loss of a family member, sanctions the expression of grief, and assists the mourners reintegrate into everyday life; the third is identity definition which are rites of passage, the fourth is the expression and negotiation of beliefs which occur in religious and cultural practices; and finally celebrations that symbolise family connections, warmth, comfort and support.

Thus the various traditional practices such as *umemulo* (the coming of age ceremony for women), *ilobolo* (bride price) and *hlonipha* (practices of respect) have strong elements of all of these, and in doing so stress the communal, reciprocal nature of relationships in traditional Zulu society.

### **2.2.5 Belief in ancestors**

Thabede (2008) stressed that there are common underlying themes that characterize many African cultures which are: the belief in a Supreme Being (*uNkulunkulu*), the belief in ancestors, the belief in witchcraft, the belief in traditional healing and the various rites of passage as described above. These aspects are all very closely interlinked. Traditional healing attempts to restore harmony and balance, and focuses on the physical symptoms whilst simultaneously attempting to re-integrate the person with their community, the earth and the spiritual world (Ross, 2010). Africans do not believe in chance, instead they search for a cause or explanation for their experiences or misfortune.

There are three types of traditional healer in Zulu society and they all specialize in different aspects: the *inyangi* is a herbalist or a traditional doctor and uses massage, steam baths, enemas and poultices; the *umthandazi* is a faith healer who uses prayer, holy water/ash or touch, generally as part of the African Independent Church

movement, and the *izangoma* is a diviner who is called by and interprets for the ancestors (Thwala, Pillay & Sagent, 2000; Kale 1995).

The ancestors or *amadlozi* are extremely important in the lives of the Zulu people. They form part of the family, regular contact with them is important, and they have powers for good or ill (Thabede, 2008). There is a system of checks and balances, and Weintrobe (1998) describes the interdependent bond between the living and the dead ancestors, which is maintained through the practice of sacrifice. The *izangoma* is the link and interpreter between the ancestors and the family when necessary, but he/she does not necessarily perform the sacrifice – this is often done by the head of the household. It is believed that as the sacrificial animal cries out, it is the ancestors' voice that is being heard. These beliefs will obviously influence the Zulu marriage, as the ancestors are very much an ongoing part of the family's everyday life. New wives and new children are introduced to the ancestors through various ceremonies and practices, so that they too fall under the care and stewardship of the ancestors of that particular family and clan. The ancestors that are chosen to be consulted are usually those people who have had positive attributes and have contributed constructively to their family and community during their lifetime (Bojuwoye, 2013). The living try to observe good moral values in order to be in good favour with the ancestors, so that they can also achieve good health and good fortune (Kasomo, 2009; Ross 2010) whereas mental or physical illness, or other negative events are seen as being caused as a result of displeasing the ancestors - if the ancestors are neglected, they will turn their back and face away from the living – *abaphansi basifulathele*, so the living need to change their behavior and to celebrate their ancestors in order to correct the negative event. However, if specific malicious acts (*ubuthakathi*) have occurred, this may be due to a living person becoming angry, jealous and envious of another, and unless this anger is dealt with, they will consult a sorcerer (*abathakathi*) in order to use magical means to injure their victim (Ngcobo and Edwards, 1998; Weintrobe, 1998).

In order to communicate, the ancestors are first called by the family elders or by the *izangoma* (diviner/healer) by burning and inhaling the smoke of *imphepho* (*Helichrysum decorum*) as a ritual incense (van Wyk, Oudtshoorn and Gericke, 1997; Hutchings, 1996). During a divinatory session, the healer or *izangoma* will act as the

intermediary between the family and the ancestors, and will breathe the ancestral spirit into the divinatory bones before throwing them. “In an ongoing emotionally charged dialogue, clients verbal and nonverbal responses become progressively more enthusiastic with the divination experienced as becoming more true and real, in a form of consensual validation as to the assessment of the problem and solutions offered” (Edwards, 2013:272). The clients may then be asked to inhale this ancestral energy from the bones and use it in the healing rituals for the ancestors which may include protection, appeasement and/or thanksgiving. Ancestors may also communicate with the living through dreams with regards to guidance, warnings or the appointment of someone to become a diviner. The *izangoma* interprets the dream, and then the individual, family or clan will comply with the ancestors’ guidance in order to prevent illness and to promote health and well being (Edwards 2010).

Traditional healing therefore does not only involve the physical body, but also includes the metaphysical world.

The elders of the community are also very important. They are shown respect, particularly for their longevity and fecundity. They are turned to for help and guidance when there are problems within the community or family, and they are expected to recommend ways of connecting to the ancestors in order to resolve issues (Kasomo 2009). Personal development has an ethical element that entails becoming more worthy of reverence and respect as one ages, hence the great respect shown for elders in traditional communities (Eagle 2005).

Thus, in traditional African society, if the married couple has problems, they first consult both their respective parents (Nwoye 2000). If this does not work they will then consult respected elders from both sides of their family. The elders hear both sides of the story, one after the other, whilst the other waits in another hut, and they are allies and mentors to both of the parties in conflict, yet at the same time they are referees and administrators of justice and make their judgment according to the community’s traditional roles and expectations. The verdict, constructive criticism and allocation of “damages” are thereby accepted by both the couple. “The traditional practice then ends in a communal ritual in which the couple spiritually re-commit themselves to the marriage” (Nwoye 2000:3).



### **2.3 Traditional Marriage counselling**

Nwoye (2000) is the only writer that I have found who attempts to directly use traditional elements of relationship counselling in his practice. He follows the process of traditional counselling – he sees the couple together first to orientate them into the process that will be followed. Then he sees one spouse for as long as necessary, sometimes for several hours; there is a break of a day, and he then sees the other spouse and hears their story in full. He uses counselling skills similar to those used in Western counselling during this stage. Once this is complete, he will ask about anything that was mentioned by the spouse. Then he sees the first spouse again after a day's gap, so that they can hear their spouse's response, and the therapist can hear their counter-arguments. The therapist can also confront and challenge the spouse about accusations from the other. After a day's gap, the other spouse is also seen and the same process is followed. During each of these sessions, if the therapist feels the spouse needs to understand things differently, if there are faulty expectations, assumptions and misconceptions, or if the spouse needs to have new information, the therapist will use some of the traditional techniques of using metaphors, proverbs, short wisdom stories etc to give a different, thought-provoking point of view. Any necessary life-skills are taught and both usually gain new knowledge. The therapist also acts as jury by determining who is at fault, and prescribing "damages". More than two sessions each are possible where necessary. Finally there is a reconciling ritual to which both are invited. The general verdict is given about who is to blame for what, and how to improve this, and the other is encouraged to forgive and forget once the issue of "damages" and reparation has been addressed. Finally an important part of the session occurs which incorporates "the ritual of re-enactment of unity" (Nwoye, 2000:8) for example after prayers of reconciliation, the spouses drink palm wine from one glass in a ritualistic manner.

The above is a description of one method of traditional marriage counselling. Nwoye (2006:439) indicates that this method is based on a role theory framework where "obligations/expectations and privileges of marriage go with occupancy of social

positions”. Harmony and peace occur when these role expectations are complied with, whilst disharmony and discord arise when either does not comply with the standard traditional marital role of their position. Of concern is where these role expectations come from and who decides on them. Nwoye (2006) suggests that they are standard marital roles belonging to the traditional African community. This may or may not be true, but in view of social constructionism, it is important to determine whether the couple wish to comply with these traditional expectations, especially because, as seen earlier, traditional African values, ideas and way of life are in flux.

Also of concern is that the therapist is acting as both judge and jury, deciding who is at fault and how this needs to be rectified. Nwoye (2006) acknowledges this when he describes his method of marital counselling as the courtroom trial method. He also uses the analogy of being a mediator or arbitrator. However, in traditional negotiations that are done in a group, several family elders from both sides of the family can provide what Nwoye (2006:449) calls a “fair and balanced” jury. He works alone, but stresses that his advanced level of empathic, deconstructive and hermeneutic listening allows him to also be fair and balanced. This is of concern when using social constructionism, as his world view will impact his way of thinking and his expectations of marriage, as well as his listening skills. Thus, even with the best of intentions he may not be able to be so, as instead of facilitating a process between the couple, he is working from his own frame of reference. Further criticisms and concerns of this method of marital counselling are addressed later.

## **2.4 Conclusion**

From the above description of the world view, values, rituals and practices of Zulu people, it is evident that the traditional way of living and of being is immersed in communal practices that are hierarchically based according to the age and sex of the individual. These involve beliefs and practices that include both families’ ancestors as well as members of the extended families and community. However, although this involves a progression of the individual through various social positions and roles within the family that are punctuated by specific rituals and with resulting behavioral expectations, these are changing as a result of Westernisation, globalization, human and women’s rights and urbanization (Sodi, Esere, Gichinga and Hove 2010). In

spite of this, as values are deeply embedded in a culture and are the slowest to change, it is important when working with Zulu couples to determine their own specific beliefs and practices, particularly with regard to communal, reciprocal values such as *ubuntu* and *ukuhlonipha*.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **WESTERN COUPLE AND FAMILY THERAPY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

Having examined family and marital relationships from the perspective of an African worldview in the previous chapter, this chapter moves on to exploring marriage relationships from a western world view. It firstly looks at the biology of love relationships and those in conflict, and then describes some of the therapeutic methods used to deal with relationship problems, which are based on a Western world view. Following on from this, it examines the need for indigenisation in order for relationship therapy and couple counselling to be more relevant to African couples and families.

##### **3.1.1 The biology of love relationships**

There are neuro-biological patterns that occur in all human couple relationships that vary according to the phases the relationship may go through from the time the couple are sexually interested in each other, are attracted to each other and fall in love, and when they are involved in a long term relationship or marriage. Each culture has its own management in terms of beliefs, values and expectations of these different stages. Thus although in the Zulu culture love relationships are permitted, and the biology of love is the same for all humans, these relationships have been explored more in terms of individuals (rather than focusing on the family or community). As discussed below, this focus on the individual is based on the Western world view, and for this reason it is included in this chapter.

In recent years research has indicated that the body, the mind and the emotions are closely interlinked and each influences the other. Fisher (1998) indicates that there are three stages in the biology of love: firstly lust or the sex drive, secondly attraction or passionate love, and thirdly attachment or companionate love. Each of these stages has a particular purpose in mating and reproduction; and each stage has underlying hormones and neural correlates.

The first stage of basic sexual attraction, lust or the sex drive results in individuals looking for sexual gratification. The “sex drive is regulated, in large part, by the preoptic area of the anterior hypothalamus, which is one source of gonatropin-releasing hormone” (Fisher, 1998:28), which then travels to the anterior pituitary to stimulate the production of follicle-stimulating hormone and luteinizing hormone. These hormones stimulate the gonads to produce testosterone, as well as oestrogen. There are other stimuli for the sex drive including seasonal light, temperature, olfactory cues and even colour.

The second stage is that of attraction; of romantic love; and the elation, obsessive thinking, and the infatuation that happens when you first fall in love. “Increased energy and focussed attention” is directed towards a preferred partner (Fisher 1998:31) and is nearly universal in human societies. Fisher explored the brain activity using functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) of those people who had just fallen “madly in love”, and found activity in two very primitive areas of the brain – the ventral tegmental area and the caudate nucleus. These areas are associated with focused attention and the motivation to win a reward. Fisher (1998) suggests that dopamine and norepinephrine are the neurotransmitters that increase at this stage; which produce feelings of heightened attention, motivation and goal directed behaviours; as well as exhilaration, excessive energy, sleeplessness, and loss of appetite.

During this phase a neurotransmitter-like substance called phenylethylamine (PEA) is released. The brain responds to it in the same way that it does to amphetamines or cocaine – infatuated lovers have boundless energy, elation and a sense of well-being when together, and feel devastated and desperate when apart. Fischer (1998) suggests that PEA is a neuro-modulator, and works in support of dopamine and norepinephrine. Serotonin is also involved in the attraction phase, but this process is complicated with contradictory elements, and how it exactly works is still being researched.

Both the sex drive and the attraction phases are viewed as having ‘appetitive’ behaviours that are distinct from the third phase of attachment, which has a range of

‘consummatory’ behaviours. Oxytocin and vasopressin are the two primary hormones that produce and maintain monogamous male-female attachment behaviours, as well as monogamous parenting behaviours in humans (Fisher 1998).

However, because these three phases of sex drive, attraction and attachment have different neuro-biology and different emotional systems, humans can have very flexible mating patterns – they can have sustained monogamous relationships, but also many may additionally have serial monogamous relationships, as well as extra-pair attachments. Thus humans can have a wide variety of mating and reproductive strategies. “Men and women can express attachment for a long-term mate, attraction to a different con-specific, and the sex drive in response to stimuli unrelated to either of these individuals” (Fisher, 1998:42).

It is important to understand the biology of love so that it can be taken into consideration when counselling couples. Many couples become concerned when the original passion of love changes - they view it as a problem, and they want to return to what they experienced originally, which is impossible. However, elements of each phase can be maintained to a certain extent. Thus for example, paying each other undivided attention whilst also being spontaneous and having fun as a couple can stimulate some of the attraction hormones.

### **3.1.2 The biology of conflict and trauma**

The other neurological information that is important to understand for marriage counselling relates to what occurs neurologically in conflict and trauma. There are elements of conflict in all marriages, and in those with domestic violence there are also aspects of multiple traumatic incidents.

Allen (1995) described the physiology of the brain as having three levels. The first, the brain stem and the reptilian brain, deal with extremely basic responses. The second consists of an ancient mammalian core called the limbic system that includes the thalamus, the hypothalamus and the amygdale. These, particularly the amygdale, deal with emotion and memory amongst other things. The limbic system reacts with basic emotions to our experiences of the world, particularly with regard to potential

harm, and issues of attachment (for example when experiencing a sense of isolation and abandonment). Surrounding the limbic system is the neo-cortex which assists us with intelligence, problem-solving and reasoning (Allen, 1995). If there is a potential threat (physical or emotional) as occurs in all mammals, the fight and flight response is activated by the neurotransmitters and the hormones nor-epinephrine (adrenaline) and dopamine to stimulate the sympathetic nervous system. This activates the relevant body organs and the person will feel physiological arousal. If it is impossible for the person to run or to fight these hormones and the stimulation of the limbic system will continue, even when the threat has passed, with resulting symptoms of arousal. This results in avoidance behaviour in order to decrease the arousal, but the continuing effect of the neurotransmitters and increased arousal results in re-experiencing the memory of the event with intrusive thoughts and dreams. However, the knowledge and understanding of this process allows a person to use the neo-cortex to intervene and constructively deal with not only the threat, but also with the aftermath and resulting symptoms from this process (Allen, 1995). Thus explaining and teaching deep slow breathing, relaxation and mindfulness techniques which assist with these biological arousal systems is very useful.

### **3.2 Western methods of relationship therapy**

In the following discussion, it is important to be aware that I have termed the methods discussed herein as Western because they are based to a greater or lesser degree on the Western world view. This view of the world is originally considered to be based on Grecian thinking and the philosophy. It is rational, materialistic, and scientific. The Western world view attempts to investigate and explain mysteries, and in doing so seeks to be objective and tries to control and master nature. It is based on the linear thinking of cause and effect, and also sees time as linear. It is reductionist, so both thinking and language is dichotomous for example, good/bad; strong/weak. Its primary focus is on the individual . Although the methods of counselling discussed below emanate from a Western world view, they all have different epistemologies.

There is a long history of marriage counselling, with different types of counselling developing in response to the issues of that time. As this list is exhaustive, for the

purpose of this study I have selected those with which I have had some experience in my 30 years of relationship and couple counselling. These are: cognitive behaviour therapy, which was used at FAMSA (Durban) where I worked as a professional social worker; Milan Family Therapy in which I was trained whilst completing my Masters degree in Social Work at the University of Durban-Westville; Narrative Therapy in which I was trained in workshops organized by the South African Association of Family Therapists, as well as with the Durban Narrative Therapy Reading Group; and Imago Relationship Therapy in which I was trained by certified clinical trainers from the Imago International Institute. I have also included Community Family Therapy, as some of the ideas from this method were being used by FAMSA Durban.

I have continued to use an eclectic mix of these Western methods of marital counselling in my private practice, depending on the particular couple and their particular problems. I have thus included the particular aspects that I use frequently, and the reason that I find them useful, in this discussion of these different theories of marriage and family therapy. This choice of relevant theories here is dependent on my world view and experience, a basic construct inherent in social constructionism

### **3.2.1 Cognitive behaviour therapy**

The first method of marriage counselling in which I was trained through working at FAMSA Durban, where it was used, was basic cognitive behaviour therapy. This type of counselling arose in reaction to and as a challenge to psychodynamic methods of marital counselling. Brown and Brown (2002) describe the following elements of cognitive behaviour therapy that are useful in marriage counselling. This therapy includes the use of positive reinforcement, where a positive event such as affirmation, praise or acknowledgement occurring after a particular behaviour, increases the likelihood of that behaviour re-occurring. Extinction occurs when a reinforcer is removed, and so the behaviour is diminished. Reciprocity refers to an exchange of rewarding behaviours between spouses, whilst coercion refers to attempts to control the other person through negative comments. The therapist attempts to get the couple to move from general complaints about each other to discussing specific observable behaviours that they want to decrease, or positive behaviours that they want to



increase. In order to do this, FAMSA used the Goal Attainment Scale (Petty, 1984) whereby the couple described their presenting problem in terms of specific observable behaviours. They then discussed what an ideal goal would be for this particular issue; and then using this they would set a realistic, measureable, specific goal to overcome the problem.

The FAMSA counsellors tried to determine firstly, the client's basic expectations of each other; secondly, what attracted them to each other; and finally what their individual decision was in terms of their own behaviour towards each other. Ruth Keech (1993) describes these aspects as the tripod of marital love.

The couple's physical and emotional needs, and how they attempted to fulfil them, were examined using Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Maslow (1943) postulated that there was a hierarchy of needs from physiological survival needs of food and shelter, to safety and security needs, to belongingness and the need to love and be loved, to self-esteem and finally to self-actualisation (Keech, 1993). He stressed that the lower order needs had to be fulfilled in order for the following ones to be addressed. Over the years there have been many criticisms, for example Hofstede (1984) criticised it for being culturally biased towards individualised societies. However at FAMSA it was found to be a useful framework to view clients' problems. Thus, for example, when looking at their survival needs aspects such as budgeting, employment, and roles were explored. When looking at 'the need to love and be loved' they discussed how they showed caring towards each other as well as the ability to deal with in-laws. Issues of parenting would be clarified. When looking at social needs versus the need for self growth, the balance between individual, couple and family time was explored (Keech, 1993).

The FAMSA counsellors also engaged in psycho-education; and practical guidance with regard to communication skills in terms of conflict management, negotiation skills, dealing with criticism, and assertiveness skills. Although much of this information is old, it is still valid and very useful to discuss with the couples.

Thus for example in conflict management, three aspects were focused on. The first was the purpose of the discussion; sometimes the couple may have tried to solve a

problem, but may be very reactive if either of them is feeling upset about a previous argument, they are still hurting from the other's behaviour, or if they want to win the fight. Secondly, the timing of the conflict needs to be examined. If either of them were tired, hungry, stressed, in a rush, in a bad mood, premenstrual, or if they had consumed alcohol; they may become more irritable and reactive than usual. Thus important or sensitive discussions need to take timing into consideration. Thirdly, the manner in which the couple discusses an issue needs to be explored. If either of them exaggerates, generalizes, blames or shames the other, ignores or shouts, swears or is violent, or calls the other person or their family names, this will exacerbate the problem. Gottman (1994) describes the 'four horseman of the apocalypse' of conflict management as the warning signs that the marriage is in serious trouble. The first 'horseman' is criticism where a person's personality, as opposed to their behaviour, is attacked. The second is contempt where the partner is insulted, mocked and emotionally abused. The third is defensiveness where responsibility is denied, excuses are made, 'but you...' cross-complaining occurs, and the past is brought up. The final horseman is stonewalling where a person ignores the other or reacts with a cold, stony silence.

When discussing negotiation, Fisher and Ury (1992) indicate that it is not about winning or losing, as this focuses on the position and not the underlying issue. In a typical example of a couple negotiating an issue, each person will take a position, argue about it and then make a concession in order to compromise. However, this pattern of negotiating does not necessarily find the best solution. Often couples get caught up in the emotion of an argument, and attack each other rather than the problem. It is therefore necessary to firstly separate the person from the problem, so that the couple can work as a team to overcome the problem together. Secondly, it is also necessary to avoid win/lose positional thinking by forbidding the positional solutions. Thirdly, it is extremely important to determine what the underlying common interests are for both people. This may be difficult as it requires both members of the couple to step away from their win/lose positions and look at 'what do we both want?' This is an extremely important step and is often the turning point in a negotiation. Finally, once the criteria for common interests are explored, it is then possible to brainstorm and invent options for mutual gain. These need to fulfil the common interests; and where applicable need to be based on fair and objective

criteria. These four steps are necessary when analyzing a problem, when planning and getting ideas, and when discussing how to reach an agreement. This type of negotiation according to Fisher and Ury (1992), and in my own experience in marriage counselling, is respectful, efficient and effective; resulting in wise decisions and an amicable agreement.

A criticism of using cognitive behaviour therapy was that the marriage counsellor could be seen as the expert; searching for flaws and problems within the marriage, and then providing information and advice from his/her own frame of reference on how to fix and improve things. Its epistemology was therefore based on a Western linear, medical model with one set view of the correct way of doing things. However, the idea of the counsellor as an expert may be likened to the head of the family, or family elder, or a *sangoma* instructing the couple how to improve their problem, and may thus have some relevance for work with Zulu couples. An important aspect to consider from an African world view (as discussed in the previous chapter) would be that the information and advice offered by the counsellor would need to take into account that concerns are seen from a communalistic perspective, rather than just from the particular couple's perspective. As mind, body and soul are closely interlinked, all these aspects would need to be part of the counsellor's input. As discussed in the final chapter, a combination of this information with the other therapeutic theories and methods mentioned below can be relevant.

### **3.2.2 Milan Family Therapy**

The second method of marital therapy that I was trained in was the Milan method. This evolved from systems theory and first order cybernetics developed by Gregory Bateson; and was used for both marital and family therapy. Cybernetics refers to knowledge about the structure and flow in information-processing systems (Friedman and Coombs, 1996). The initial thinking was that families get stuck in repetitive loops of destructive behaviour, or unbalanced hierarchical sub-systems; and that the job of the therapist was to assist the families to identify this pattern in order to change it. An example of therapy based on first order cybernetics is Minuchin's structural family therapy. The metaphor used at that time was that the family was seen as a thermostat, trying to maintain a balance; with the therapist as separate from the family, and

therefore able to identify and fix the faulty patterns (Friedman and Coombs, 1996). As is evident from this, it was based on a Western world view.

Working in Milan at this time were four psychiatrists - namely Palazzoli, Boscolo, Cecchin and Prata - who attempted to build on this theory, thereby developing a therapeutic process that became based on second order cybernetics. This occurred with the realization that the therapist could not stand outside the family system, but in joining the family/couple, the therapist became part of the system. The metaphor changed, and ideas were based on biological and ecological systems. The Milan team were not looking for destructive patterns of behaviour within the family, but rather were looking for underlying patterns of meaning that the family gave to their own lives and relationships, and which therefore shaped their behaviour. The Milan group believed that a family was connected to each other in ongoing relationships, and that one person's actions and emotions affected everyone else in recursive ways. In order to assist the therapist therefore to remain neutral and to be able to work with the family without merging with it, a team of other family therapists would assist. First potential hypotheses about the patterns of meaning that each family member adhered to were brainstormed by the therapist and the therapeutic team prior to the session with the family, and possible questions were developed to test these hypotheses during the session. This enabled the therapist to be aware of her/his own thoughts and beliefs about the family, and assisted with maintaining one of the important values of the Milan approach to family therapy: neutrality. This challenged the idea of one person (the Identified Patient) being the problem, and prepared the therapist to query a comprehensive range of possibilities that promoted functional and dysfunctional relationships in the family. Circular questions (which are questions that are asked of each person, one after the other, building on each of their answers) were used to explore the family's relationships, their interconnectedness, and how their feelings and actions influenced each other. The session was observed by the team from behind a one-way mirror, with the purpose of assisting the therapist in maintaining neutrality, and they gave comments when necessary. Then in the break in the session, the team and the therapist brain-stormed together to develop an intervention statement, which included the teams' observations of these patterns, as well as a possible homework exercise. Upon returning to the session the family was read the intervention statement

after which they could decide to use or not use this feedback at home, depending on how useful they found it.

The intervention was a way of introducing “news of difference”. In order for the process to be seen as neutral, it was up to the family whether they used the intervention or not. Thus, not only were the questions circular, but the whole therapeutic process was also circular – each question built on the previous answer, and each session built on the one before (Tomm, 1984). According to Friedman and Coombs (1996:6) the Milan team in their research, then focused more on the effect of circular questions as opposed to developing interventions, as they found that the “families were changing as they listened to each other’s answers”. Thus the hierarchy between therapist and the family/couple was minimized, and multiple viewpoints were encouraged as the therapist and the family became co-participants within the same system, and collaboratively co-created the experience and direction of therapy. Another example of the difference in this method was that the hypothesis moved from being a singular idea about the workings of the family, to become a series of ideas, several of which may be applicable (Campbell, 1999).

This method has been criticised in several ways. One related to the impossibility of the therapist remaining neutral. Another was that, since it focused on the patterns of interactions and meaning within the family thereby working at depth on underlying dynamics, it avoided focusing directly on the specific problem itself which was of concern to the family and the referring professionals.

In terms of using this approach with Zulu couples there are two potential difficulties. The emphasis on the internal dynamics of the nuclear family ignores the impact of beliefs, ideas and practices in the social context. For Zulu couples it is likely that this focus would need to broaden if using this therapy from an African world view. Another constraint in using this method with Zulu people relates to the expectation that all family members freely contribute their opinions, and comment on each other’s behaviour. For Zulu couples and families, the issue of *ukuhlonipha* would be important to consider. As discussed in the previous chapter *ukuhlonipha* is a rule of respectful, deferential behaviours that is very hierarchical, and dictates who may speak to whom, how they may speak and what they may discuss. Although changes

are gradually occurring, these expectations of behaviour are still strongly entrenched as mentioned in the previous chapter.

However, in practice I have found the circular thinking of the Milan approach very useful. It assisted me in changing my own epistemology from one based on linear, cause/effect, dichotomous patterns to being more circular, recursive and inclusive in my thinking – instead of either/or, I am able to think both/and. This is extremely useful in marriage counselling as it prevents the counsellor from taking sides.

I have also found circular questioning very useful. The problem definition questions, where each person is asked what they view as the problem, and the questions where they are asked to explain the other's behaviour have often been found sufficient to change the way that members in the family think about the issue and to be less blaming; and to see the issue more heterogeneously in one session (Diorinou and Tseliou, 2014). The questions that I have also found useful include difference questions (for example, if the couple say things have improved it is useful to ask 'what is different now to when you first came for counselling'; or 'what is different when you feel heard and understood compared to when you feel taken for granted' or 'what could/did you do differently'); as well as hypothetical questions (such as 'if you could wave a magic wand, what would you like your marriage to look like'; or 'if XXX didn't happen, what would your marriage look like'). Another very useful category of circular questions includes tracking questions. These questions track each person's behaviour and response to each other (for example, "So when your husband/wife spent too much money, what did you do? And when you did that, what did s/he do; and when that happened, what did you do in response?") This builds up a picture of the pattern of what typically occurs; and can be very relevant when used in conjunction with psycho-education, for example, on conflict management or negotiation. It can show the couple that they both need to change their behaviour in order to deal with conflict constructively. It is also useful to use when asking about other people's behaviour that are not present in the counselling session. Possible examples of its use with Zulu couples are included in the final chapter.

### **3.2.3 Narrative therapy**

The third method that I learnt about was narrative therapy. In this method one moves from the dominant, problem-saturated story, to the preferred story. The problem is usually described as a thin, one dimensional version of the issue. As a result, the people who come to see the therapist are invited to examine their own beliefs and values: what beliefs support the problems, where do these come from and what processes have recruited people into those beliefs? The process of therapy therefore initially explores the dominant, problem-saturated story by deconstructing, identifying and taking apart the underlying beliefs and meaning related to the story. Morgan (2000), White and Epston (1990) and White (2007) describe the basic process of narrative therapy as follows:

First the problem is described and then can be externalised. The problem needs to be seen as fluid and evolving, rather than fixed and permanent. The naming of the problem moves from expert to popular definitions e.g. from jealousy to ‘the Green-eyed Monster’; or from anxiety to ‘the What-if Worrier’. A metaphor may also be used to describe the problem e.g. the wave of depression that swamps a person, or the thunderstorm of conflict. The definition must be mutually acceptable to both the clients.

Secondly the problem’s relative influence is explored. This includes mapping the influence of the problem on the clients’ lives by using deconstruction questions which explore in depth and in detail the context of the problem, and the cultural and the social practices in the person’s life. These deconstruction questions explore how the problem affects the relationships with each other, their parenting, their work/school, and their friendships.

The influence of persons/relationships on the problem is then deconstructed - how have the different people, including the client/s, helped or hindered the problem; and what do they do to submit to or defy its needs? What happened then?

Once the relative influence of the problem on the persons, and the influence of the persons on the problem have been explored, a very important step is taken whereby the clients evaluate the effect of the problem on their lives - is it positive or negative? They need to justify and explain this evaluation, and make a decision as to what they want to do about it. This is a crucial step because sometimes the problem is only an issue for one of them, and not the other. Do both want to work on the problem in the relationship?

Once the problem has been explored in depth, the alternative story is explored (Morgan, 2000). As the problem- saturated story is deconstructed, the therapist (and the team if there is one, as described below) listen for examples or phrases that indicate times when the problem has not been an issue, or times when the clients felt they were in control of the problem, rather than the problem controlling their lives and relationships. These instances are called unique outcomes. Opening the space for, and bringing forth the alternative, preferred story follows a similar process to that of deconstructing the problem-saturated story (Morgan, 2000). Firstly, the unique outcome to be externalized is defined. Then the influence of the unique outcome on the clients' lives is mapped by clarifying the effect the unique outcome has on their lives, and the effect they and their relationship has on the unique outcome. They are then asked to evaluate the effect of the unique outcome, and to justify this to determine which story and meaning they prefer. Doing this allows the unique outcome to become a thick (multilayered with many facets) and rich description, which enables the couple to actively choose the alternative story.

White (White and Epston, 1990) mentions that one needs to explore both “the landscape of action” – what happens in what sequence involving whom, as well as “the landscape of consciousness/identity” – the meaning or beliefs given to this; and to zigzag between both landscapes.

The above is the narrative therapeutic process used with a client(s) and a therapist. However, in order to enrich and thicken such an experience, the use of the reflecting team (or outsider witnesses) adds another dimension to the stories. After the family/couple has discussed the issue with the therapist for about 40 minutes, whilst



the outsider witnesses observe from the back of the room, the team has a conversation for about 10 minutes where they give their reflections, whilst the therapist and couple/family watch. Then the therapist and the people who consult the therapist reflect on the reflection. Finally, they all meet to process and deconstruct this sequence of happenings. For example they discuss why certain questions were asked, and which questions were useful and which were not (Freedman and Coombs, 2002). Another way of enriching and thickening the alternative story which is particularly useful to thicken the alternative story when a team is not available is to use therapeutic letters (White and Epston 1990). The therapist notes the client/s' conversation verbatim during the session, then reflects on it afterwards; and then sends these reflections to the client/s in a letter using the client/s own words as much as possible, before the next session.

When using narrative processes with marital problems one partner may be used as the outsider witness; after the therapist has interviewed one member of the couple and has deconstructed their views and practices about the issue, the other member is asked to reflect on what they have heard whilst their partner listens. Bird (2004) stresses that when interviewing couples it is very important not to get stuck in polarizing language, but to ask questions in a relational way so that the idea of multiple options and possibilities are highlighted. An example could be that instead of discussing the lack of trust as opposed to trust, one can ask about which areas of life do you trust him/her, and in which areas of life do you not trust her/him. This implies a wide variety of possibilities. Once change is occurring during the therapeutic process, the couple may be requested to invite a wider audience to act as witnesses in order to celebrate and affirm any changes that they have noticed. This consolidates the alternative preferred story of their relationship. Thus in this therapeutic method, which is based on social constructionism, the idea of multiple realities is stressed; and the people consulting the therapist are seen as experts on their own problems, while the therapist is influential but not directive.

White (2007) describes a variety of narrative conversations that examine and challenge the notion of a fixed, core identity. These conversations follow the model described above to a certain extent, whilst emphasizing different aspects.

Externalising conversations help to challenge negative internal beliefs about the self and/or others by objectifying the problem so that the client/s can have an identity separate from the problem. This frees them to find options for successful problem resolutions, but in a way that includes the different voices of their family and friends in the development of their sense of identity.

The second category of narrative conversations that White (2007) mentions are those that include unique outcomes, or exceptions to the problem-dominated story, so that an alternative preferred story may emerge. In this conversation the concept of understanding an internal state (which may result in a fixed, static view of the person's identity) is broadened to include understanding intentional states (where the person has intents and purposes based on their beliefs, values and commitments), thereby encouraging a sense of personal agency as they take charge of their lives. "It is not actually "things" like motives and needs that shape life, but socially constructed conclusions about these things" (White, 2007: 107).

Re-membering conversations are based on the idea that identity is built on associations or a club of life, rather than on a core self. In other words people grow into adulthood in a context of a family and a community, who socialise the person according to their beliefs and values. As a result the individual's sense of identity which may appear fixed, is in fact fluid as it has been shaped by their social context. Using the metaphor of a club, White suggests that by identifying the influence of their social context, the person can influence their own sense of identity. These conversations allow the person to either upgrade or honour a person who has contributed to their life, or to downgrade and revoke the membership of someone who has been hurtful or destructive in their life. The client explores in detail the contribution that the person has made to their life, and also the contribution that they made to that person's life - how they effected and enriched the other person's sense of identity, their values and beliefs, and their sense of purpose. Sometimes clients may have the startling realization that, not only did that person influence their life, but they also were a worthwhile presence in the other person's life (White, 2007). This is an active re-engagement with the people in one's life either practically or metaphorically, which enables a review of the many identities available to a person both now and in the future; and emphasises the fact that we can actively choose the way we view

ourselves, and do not need to accept others' versions of who we are. This may be difficult for Zulu couples from a very traditional way of life that follow the rigid socially prescribed roles and practices, but it may be a useful way of processing the idea that a person can be viewed as more than their role of *makoti* or of *umnumzana*.

Definitional ceremonies as described by White (2007:165) are "rituals that acknowledge and 'regrade' peoples' lives". People may tell or perform "the stories of their lives before an audience of carefully chosen outsider witnesses...who respond to these stories with retellings that are shaped by a specific tradition of acknowledgement". White (2007) stresses that this process is not about applause, professional evaluation and interpretation, or about advice and giving an opinion. The outsider witnesses are coached into discussing and witnessing with each other the aspects of the story they were drawn to; that resonated with them and touched them personally. The purpose is to acknowledge the narrator's experiences and to thicken their story. White stresses that it is important for the therapist to remain active in guiding the outsider witness responses to the narrator's story so that these contribute to the rich development of the alternative story; and these don't become advice, evaluation or applause.

Scaffolding conversations include some of Michael White's work and most recent ideas prior to his death. They build on the idea of the therapist's questions zigzagging between the landscape of action (what the client/s do) and the landscape of consciousness/identity (what meaning this has and how it builds their sense of identity). As White (2007) describes, when people have problems they try to solve them using familiar actions and ideas, but this confines them within their comfort zone, and they do not grow into what is possible. White (2007:263) describes this gap between the two zones as a "zone of proximal development" and suggests that "this zone can be traversed through conversational partnerships that provide the necessary scaffolding to achieve this – that is the sort of scaffolding that provides the opportunity for people to proceed across this zone in manageable steps". This climb, via the scaffolding, to what is possible results in a strong sense of agency, of being empowered to live one's life according to one's intentions. White (2007) based his ideas on scaffolding on Vygotsky's work on learning in early childhood. Vygotsky suggested that development was based on learning; and that complex, abstract

learning occurred through social collaboration. Parents and significant others broke down the necessary intermediate steps, between what is possible for the child to learn independently and what is possible to learn and achieve in collaboration and supported by others, into manageable portions. According to Vygotsky, language and the evolution of the meanings of words is crucial for abstract thinking and concept formation; and this allows the child or person to step back from their concrete known experience and to make other choices based on abstract thinking, thereby attaining “personal agency and responsible action” (White, 2007: 280). White suggests scaffolding steps involving distancing tasks that move through five possible levels: low, medium, medium-high, high and finally very high distancing tasks. If the client/s answer a question with “I don’t know” it is necessary to go down a level and explore it further, or to move horizontally by asking others or giving examples of how others would answer the question.

The narrative approach has been very useful in helping individuals, couples, families and communities. Narrative therapy takes into account the social context of the couple, and is able to include the extended family and community as outsider witnesses; both of which would fit with the communalistic, relational thinking of the African world view. However, narrative therapy tends to challenge the accepted social order, as it aims to empower those who are disempowered or marginalized. It looks at the impact of gender, race and other social constructs from the dominant culture on the client/s identity and on their problems, and so is very useful when working with marginalised and disadvantaged people (Semmler and Williams, 2000). However, this could be seen as contrary to the patriarchy and the *ukuhlonipha* that underpin Zulu traditional culture, and therefore the counsellor would need to be sensitive to this, without necessarily maintaining the status quo. As Andrews (2009:306) indicates “the principle of gender equality appears to contradict cultural or religious norms regarding women’s role and status” but it is important to address these sensitively with the couple in a manner that is respectful. Aspects of this method that could be useful to use with Zulu couples include the use of externalizing with metaphors, the idea that the couple are more than just their socially defined roles, and the use of small scaffolding steps to cross the divide and address these issues constructively. This is discussed in further detail in the final chapter.

### 3.2.4 Community Family Therapy

Rojano (2004) describes a method of therapeutic intervention that derived from working with low-income, socially destitute families that have multiple problems. It is based on the eco-systemic approach to family therapy. The client/s and the therapist both do a detailed assessment, using questionnaires, to determine the amount of negative energy generated from past and present problems; and also complete an inventory of the amount of positive energy obtainable from existing assets and resources in order “to achieve a favourable counterbalance” (Rojano, 2004:59). Community family therapy then uses three intervention strategies by encouraging both the client/s and the therapist to become involved in change at several levels: The first is at an individual level with psychotherapy, marital and family therapy, life skills training, leadership training and medication. The second is through wrap-around (intense and widespread) networking with other resources within the community, and the third is social activism and civic engagement. The aim is not only to assist the clients directly at a psycho-social level and by empowering them to increase their earning capacity, but also to assist them indirectly by enabling them to become change-agents within their communities, thus breaking the cycle of poverty and deprivation. Many of these techniques are used by social agencies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in South Africa, mainly because of the type of funding offered through government subsidies for community development programmes. However, community family therapy does this intentionally, and seems to link the community development directly to their client cases. In this way the clients are both contributing and benefitting from the engagement with accountability flowing both ways and the NGO and wider community also benefit. This therapy is therefore multi-systemic. This method may work well with Zulu clients, as it would contribute to both the community and to the clients and their families, and thus it fits in with the concept of *ubuntu* – the collective identity, caring and sharing described in the previous chapter.

Kasiram and Oliphant (2007) expand on Rojano’s community family therapy as a way of working with South African families. They stress there is a need to aggressively

network both within and outside of the profession of social work, and that getting together and working with the family as well as taking social action in the community about their needs, with the therapists wearing several different hats, could be effective. Who is included, the context (in the home, in a community setting, in nature), and the methods used to assist people need to be flexible and creative in order for a multi-systemic therapeutic process to work constructively. In this way several levels of the system are being addressed using a variety of methods.

### **3.2.5 Imago Relationship Therapy**

The most recent method that I have been trained in has been Imago Relationship Therapy. This therapeutic method is based on the relational paradigm. As Hendrix (2005:25) stresses it is based on an ontology of connection where “reality is viewed essentially as a tapestry in which everything is intrinsically connected”. Instead of focusing on the individuals or the system, it focuses on the relationship as the unit of analysis. This thinking is based on the findings of quantum physics, which describes atomic particles as operating in relationship with one another: “emerging, disappearing, reappearing and merging in relationship to other particles” (Luquet in Hendrix, Hunt, Hannah and Luquet, 2005:3). In looking at cosmogenesis, each element in the cosmos is differentiated from other elements and each has its own subjectivity, yet all work together in communion to form all that we see and all that we are. Jordon quoted by Luquet (2005:3) states that “we begin to see reality defined by relationship, continuities, and probabilities rather than by discrete objects and dualities”. Human relationships follow the same process: we are subjective according to our own personality and point of view; we need differentiation in order to be aware of how we are different from others; and we need communion to help us understand and appreciate our oneness with others. Imago Relationship therapists view the couple relationship as the vehicle for personal growth. Through dialogue the couple engages “in communion and emerges into a higher level of differentiation within connection” (Luquet, 2005:6). Thus the central process used in Imago Relationship Therapy is the Imago Intentional Dialogue, which enables couples to become safe yet passionate within their relationship. It is a three-step process whereby the therapist facilitates, guides and coaches the couple to firstly mirror and reflect their partner’s point of

view; secondly, to validate it from the partner's perspective; and thirdly, to empathise with their feelings (Zeilinski, 1999).

One of the premises of Imago Relationship Therapy is that each of us carries an unconscious image of our primary caretakers; and this image, or imago, guides our choice for our romantic partner. Why does one choose a particular person rather than another? There are many factors that contribute to this. Timing is important – one needs to feel ready for love. Proximity is crucial – one needs to be able to interact with each other. Most people fall in love with people who have several similarities to themselves – values, hobbies, family background, and intelligence. However, of great importance is what Fisher (2009) calls the “love map”, which is the result of an accumulation of many, many subtle experiences throughout childhood that sculpt romantic choices. Harville Hendrix, who is the founder of Imago Therapy, suggests that an unconscious connection is made between two people that is the result of the recognition of a familiar culture or climate, which includes both the positive and negative characteristics of the family of origin. The emotional climate of the home contains patterns of relating, connecting and disconnecting that are familiar to each individual in the couple. The reason for the attraction (the Imago match) is unconscious, and initially the individual may only be aware of the positive attributes of their new partner. However, according to Imago theory, there is an equal attraction to the negative characteristics since they are what draw a couple together for one main purpose – the purpose of healing. Imago relationship therapy defines a relationship as a connection between two people with the main purpose of the connection being healing of the past in order to ensure growth in the future. Slade in Hendrix, Hunt, Hannah and Luquet (2005) warns that an overreliance on one's partner as the source of healing can result in the abdication of personal responsibility for one's own healing, and she stresses that the healing needs to be reciprocal – not only ‘what can my partner do for me?’, but also ‘what can I do for my partner?’. It is important to be conscious and intentional in all love relationships, because a person can be either wounding or healing in their interactions with others (2005).

In order to be intentional, conscious and healing in relationships one needs to feel safe, and to override the reactivity and defensiveness that arises from the reptilian brain as described earlier in this chapter. In therapy therefore, the Imago dialogue is

also used to explore the parent-child relationship and to determine the wounding that occurred in the couple's childhood in a particular development stage. This helps to determine what emotional needs are incomplete, so that the relationship partner can help to heal these. Partners are assisted to "honour and empathise with each other's childhood wounds, give full expression to their anger and their sadness.... and stretch to meet each other's needs. This program [the Imago therapeutic process] seemed to restart their arrested childhood development and help them achieve emotional adulthood." (Hendrix, 2005:18). Growth is then possible in that the individuals can feel safe enough to claim and celebrate the hidden and denied parts of themselves, and behaviour change is possible. As well as using the Imago Intentional Dialogue to explore the childhood wounds, the dialogue is also used to close exits to the relationship, such as addiction and affairs; to share the vision for the relationship and to express appreciation. When coaching the use of the Intentional Dialogue, the Imago therapist also uses techniques such as giving sentence stems and doubling. Instead of asking a question, the therapist gives a sentence stem such "When you get come home late I feel..." which the speaker/sender completes, directing it to the listener/receiver. Doubling occurs when the client is battling to express themselves, and instead of asking questions, the therapist very tentatively offers a full sentence to see if it fits such as "When you come home late I feel unimportant, neglected and lonely". This often helps the clients to clarify their feelings even if only to indicate this is not what they feel. Both these techniques deepen the couple's dialogue with each other.

Thus Imago is phenomenological as it uses biological information to explore the relational space between the couple. Similarly, it uses this theoretical background when working with groups of people - a variation of the Imago Intentional Dialogue called the 'communologue' is used with groups of people in organizations, in the community, and in business. This has been used throughout the world in sensitive political contexts such as the Arab/Israeli conflict (Schleiffer, 2005; 2015).

This relational paradigm, that uses cosmogenesis and sees the world as one, fits with the African world view that sees mind, body and spirit as one; and views humans as closely linked to the natural world. In addition, ancestor respect, acknowledgement and worship may find some meaning in this therapy's premise of primary caretakers influencing choice of partners and the relationships themselves. The effort to connect



with this source of influence is then made easier. However, although the concept of parents and ancestors having an effect on the present day relationship may resonate with Zulu couples, the Imago Intentional dialogue does not fit with the concept of ancestor veneration. The Imago Intentional dialogue may also not fit with the concept of *ukuhlonipha*, as although active, respectful listening skills are taught, the couple is required to validate and empathise with the other's point of view, which could be counter to the expectations in a patriarchal society. Further discussion of the use of Imago Relationship Therapy will continue in response to this study's results in the final chapter.

In concluding this discussion of the different types of therapy, it is important to note that they all have very different epistemologies that evolved in response to each other - moving from the linear model of cognitive behavioural therapy, to the circular thinking of Milan family therapy, to Narrative therapy with its concepts of multiple realities, the multi-systemic community family therapy, and then Imago Relationship therapy that uses biology and cosmogenesis to explore the relational space. In each of these methods, the exact process of therapy as well as the role of the therapist is different as they reflect their epistemology. However, of great importance is that in spite of this, the underlying philosophy for all of them is still based on the Western world view.

### **3.3 Indigenisation**

When looking at the previous chapter, and the in-depth discussion on the African world view vis-à-vis the above discussion on Western therapeutic methods for relationship counselling, it is evident that there is a need for indigenization in African Social Work. Western methods have dominated the field of family and marital therapy. Ross (2010:44) writes about the “over-reliance of South African social work on Western texts”, and “the need for indigenous social work education and practice”. Osei-Hwedie (2007) indicates that Afro-centrism has developed as an alternative world view to counter the hegemony resulting from Western influences on Africa. Various experts in some of the therapeutic methods mentioned above, at the invitation of the South African Association of Marital and Family Therapy, have visited South

Africa for training and conferences from places like America, Britain, Europe and Australia. At these conferences South African psychology and social work clinicians were also presenting papers that described their experiences using these methods with their own indigenous clients. Examples, amongst many others, include the use a six-step problem solving process by Nell and Seedat (1989) who were working with families and primary health care workers in Soweto; Henning (1990) describes the use of different family therapy methods with families in a teaching hospital in Harare, Zimbabwe; Lifshitz, Kgoadi and van Niekerk (1990) worked with families in Mamelodi, and mention how firstly they had to market and gain credibility for their psychotherapeutic services by using drama with various community structures, and how this impacted on their own epistemology; Kasiram (2000) describes working with multi problem families the use of building hope through various means to empower both the family and the therapist; Rankin and Rankin (2000) describe the use of art within a narrative process where groups of people described and tell their story to art students who painted their interpretation of an aspect that resonates with them (the re-telling) and then the art students shared their pictures with the original group (the re-telling of the re-telling); and Appelt (2000) who described her journey using narrative processes with a group of adolescent girls who had suffered trauma and the resilience that evolved within a community of concern.. This implied that these Western therapeutic techniques were universal and could be transferred easily from one culture to another; from one world view to another with a little adjustment.

Lifshitz however, already in 1989, stressed that we need to not only adjust our ways of working with indigenous clients, but also we need to adjust our world view, ways of thinking, understanding, and our language so that our ways of healing are applicable to those people whose world-view is not Western. He stressed that African people have assimilated Western views, but their own world view has not been displaced. He added that such alternative therapeutic procedures need to draw from both Western and African approaches in order to form a “hybrid” (1989:50) in order to have the benefit of both worlds.

Nell and Seedat (1989:41) also mention that therapists who want to extend services to the majority of South Africans need to have “a sensitivity to power relations and the dynamics of social and cultural transformation”.

However, in spite of these therapists being aware of the need for cultural sensitivity, as well as the use of a variety of therapeutic modalities, of great importance is that they did not examine or use the cultural world view of the African people they worked with.

Interestingly Bar-On (2003) comments that social work, as practiced in the United States of America and in Britain, is now practiced throughout the world; and yet, although many writers have stressed that Western-based social work is irrelevant and ineffective in non-Western societies, there has been no comparative research of its application in different societies. “It remains unclear, therefore, what parts of its knowledge and ensuing interventions are universal and which might be particular to specific population groups” (Bar-On, 2003:27).

He looks at why there is a need for an African social work and suggests five different reasons. The first is that Africa’s social problems are different to those of the West. Obviously some problems are similar, such as homelessness, addiction, and domestic violence; but some are unique – Africa suffers from disasters like drought, civil war, and unmanageable illnesses. Secondly, Africa does not have the material wealth to deal with its social problems in the same way that the West does. Thirdly, in richer Western countries, social work is part of a continuous formal and informal service network that includes schools and education, nursing and health care, and institutionalized social security. These all support each other, whereas in Africa these services are either not present or are “subject to bureaucratic mania and to ‘sticky fingers’” (Bar-On, 2003:29). Fourthly, in Africa there may be political interference as welfare provision is used to build loyalty. For example the people and the social workers need to curry favour with local chiefs in order to be allocated services. Finally, the teachings of Western social work are seen to be Eurocentric, and do not take the African values and way of life into account.

Some of the issues mentioned by Bar-On (2003) against indigenizing social work include that we are all human, and therefore humanistic theories apply to everyone. An example of this is Spangenberg's article on the relevance of the Person Centred Approach to social work in Africa (2003). Another concern is that universal standards such as international human rights and issues of feminism need to be upheld, and indigenization may exclude these. Some suggest that because the social problems and their alleviation around the world are different, social workers are already using indigenous methods. Another important point is that social work is a world-wide profession and therefore needs a global body of knowledge. This would then allow social work students and lecturers, as well as qualified social workers, to be internationally competitive and have access to jobs and programmes in other countries that might not be available at home. This would include the possibility of exchange programmes so that people from other countries can contribute to this country; and through this opportunity for mobility, there would be a "decreased risk of academic 'in-breeding'" (International Association of Universities, 2012). Thus there would be greater engagement not only with local, but also with national, regional and international issues. This would allow joint research collaboration with other organizations throughout the world, particularly research that assists with social development challenges such as rural development and food security (International Association of Universities, 2012).

If indigenization related to social work is to occur, how is it to occur? Bar On (2003) summarises seven proposals: The first is the suggestion that social work maintains its Western theories and practices but includes different cultural practices ; the second suggestion is to teach social work students practical rather than theoretical skills such as cooking, sewing and gardening so they can impart these to their clients in poverty reducing community programmes; thirdly, it may be useful to decrease the focus on individuals and families and rather focus on larger communities; the fourth suggestion is to expand social work services to include more preventative services such as primary health care, family planning and development; fifthly, advocating for personal and community income generation is suggested; the sixth suggestion is that social work should work at a political macro level in social policy; and the final suggestion is to challenge the political structures in welfare and allow greater input by "the masses".

Many of these ideas on indigenization are valuable, and in fact are already in practice. When looking at FAMSA, it started using Western therapeutic methods for individual, couple and group counselling; but also offered preventative methods such as the Education for Living life skills programme in schools; and talks and workshops to couples, religious leaders, and other helping professionals. At this time, salaries of the social workers were subsidized by the various government social welfare departments. However, in the 1990's the government changed its subsidy system and stopped subsidizing individual salaries and rather subsidized welfare programmes. This resulted in FAMSA expanding to include more community development (including developing income generating projects) and outreach in its services. It therefore had a treatment programme that gave remedial assistance to individuals, couples and families; and a preventative programme. FAMSA were also very involved in the formation of welfare policy that related to social development and to the field of marriage and the family at both a local and a national level. However, my concern is that although these changes possibly allowed FAMSA to be more relevant and to reach a wider audience, the therapeutic aspects of the agency were still, to my knowledge, very much based on Western counselling methods. They did not seem to include the values that make up the African world view. Possibly this is due to the scarcity of teaching, of both the values and any techniques based on these Afro-centric values, at university level or in the continued education of social workers.

In their account of the history of the Association for Social Work Education in Africa (ASWEA), Gray, Kreitzer and Mupedziswa (2014) describe how the association, which ceased to exist in 1989, had investigated alternatives to the dominant Western social work thinking and practices as early as 1971 in an attempt at decolonization and indigenisation. The ideas discussed in this organization obviously focused on social work training curricula and teaching skills; and illustrated that African students related better to community development and group work as these were more relevant to them, rather than the individual based case work. Up until the 1980's, social work in Africa had tended to be urban based, after which rural development became more of a focus (Gray et al 2014). The move from a remedial social welfare model to social development was slow, and throughout the tenure of the ASWEA there was a constant debate about the balance between casework and community development. Of interest

is that in 1973/4 when Mali was in the process of indigenizing its social work training, the first step of training was for students to renew their knowledge and connection with both urban and rural life by interviewing people from both walks of life (Gray et al 2014). In many other African countries the students became involved in a wide variety of community development-based programmes, and membership to ASWEA expanded to include rural community development and other non-professional training centres. Gray et al (2014:109). stress that indigenization allows African social workers to fulfil the underlying universal social work values of respect for human dignity and worth, and the quest for social justice through “focusing on local issues and problems and seeking culturally relevant solutions.”

However, Gray et al (2014) describe how a research project in 2008 attempted to measure whether Mupedziswa’s model (2001) of indigenized social work education was being practiced. The model stresses indigenizing various curriculum-based activities such as the content of lectures, the use of interactive methods, and fieldwork; as well extra-curricular activities such as the production of indigenous research and materials. The research investigated the University of Johannesburg, the University of Botswana and the National University of Lesotho. It found that social development was well established in the curriculum of these universities, but that the extra- curricular activities were less evident, and therefore there was little local feedback into social development policies. The split between social policies and the university’s ‘ivory-tower’ therefore needs addressing so that local research informs welfare policy, possibly by involving local policy makers and local leaders in the research process, so that they have a vested interest in adopting the research recommendations.

Osei-Hwedie (2007) suggests that instead of an either/or situation where either Western social work theory or indigenous Afro-centric theory is taught, it is necessary to teach both. It is also necessary to develop a new theoretical framework that “combines local and universal values and processes ...and that accepts the local and the universal as equally important” (2007:113). This is certainly very relevant, and is similar to what Collins, Jordan and Coleman (2010) suggest when they stress the importance of knowing “the grand narratives” or world view of a culture, while being

sensitive to the fact that each person, couple and family have their own respective micro-narratives within that particular culture.

I agree with Bar-On (2003:31) when he says that we need to actively determine “to which *values* do different societies subscribe and, hence, what knowledge and resulting interventions and concomitant skills do they require to promote them?” He describes how the Western world view about the meaning of life is based on the individual, and therefore knowledge and policies are focused on the extent to which individuals gain autonomy and self-fulfilment. In contrast, in Africa social networks are more important; thus knowledge, the concept of society, and the meaning of life would be based on roles and concomitant duties and obligations, resulting in different policies. However, because Western theories, policies and practices are so entrenched, it is first necessary for all social workers to challenge their own ethnocentric beliefs and values; to become aware of different communication patterns, beliefs and values, as well as the specific cultural protocols from other cultures (Collins, Jordan, and Coleman 2010). In order to develop indigenous theory, policy and therapeutic methods it is also necessary “to engage in reflective learning with the persons who are most knowledgeable about what Africans require and how they best can be served”. H Bar-On suggests talking to, amongst others, clients as well as “aunts and uncles in the extended family” (2003:35). This is what this research study has attempted to do.

### **3.4 Conclusion**

In this chapter some of the Western remedial couple and family therapy theories and practices were critically described. Particular ideas and methods that have been found to be useful were discussed and their applicability to counselling Zulu couples was explored. The chapter ended with an exploration of issues relating to indigenization.

In the following chapter the details of the research study will be clarified in order to determine empirically whether the ideas discussed in the previous two chapters have worth in order to develop relevant guidelines for marriage counselling with Zulu couples.

## **CHAPTER FOUR RESEARCH METHODS**

### **4.1 Introduction**

Bar-On (2003) suggests that in order to develop indigenous theory and practice, it is necessary to speak to those most knowledgeable of African contexts, experiences, beliefs and values: the people themselves. Central to this study, then, has been obtaining the views and perceptions of Zulu people regarding their marriage and family life.

The research study was conducted in two phases. In the first phase of this qualitative research study the experiences and the meanings given to Zulu traditions, customs, rituals, and values in relation to family and particularly marriage were obtained from three different groups. These consisted of Zulu couples, Zulu family elders and Zulu social workers. The social workers were specifically included in an attempt to discover which traditions, cultural activities and beliefs they use with their clients. Thus, the first phase of this research obtained in depth information about indigenous beliefs and practices relating to family and marriage. Then in the second phase, this information was analysed and the results were shared with a group of Zulu social workers who specialise in marriage counselling in order to develop guidelines for best practice in Zulu marital therapy.

In this chapter therefore, the research design is clarified, and the samples, the research instruments and the research processes are explained in order to illustrate their trustworthiness. The chapter also pays attention to the ethical considerations of the study and to the limitations against which the findings must be considered.

### **4.2 Research design**

A research design is a strategic framework for action that guides research activity to ensure that sound conclusions are reached. Maxwell (2013:3) describes five



components of a good research design - the goals of the research, the conceptual framework, the research questions, the methods and the validity of the research. He mentions that Frank Lloyd Wright emphasized the design of something “must fit not only with its use but also with its environment”; and so one needs to continually assess how the research design is actually working during the process of research, how it influences and is influenced by its environment, and to make adjustments accordingly in order to achieve what the research hopes to accomplish. Durrheim (2006) describes four dimensions that need to fit with one another to produce the strategic framework for the research design: the purpose, the research paradigm, the context and the research techniques to collect and analyse the data.

Hereunder, I present a table that visually captures the research methodology used in this study.

**Table 1 Relationship between research objectives and phases of the research**

<b>Goal</b>	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Phase</b>	<b>Method</b>	<b>Analysis</b>
To explore the contemporary Zulu practices that enhance, and those that constrain or hurt marriage. To determine which are used and are relevant in helping troubled Zulu couples	To identify which customs, rituals, beliefs and practices Zulu couples have experienced and found relevant during childhood, courtship, and marriage, and how these give meaning to their relationship.	1	In depth interviews with 12 Zulu heterosexual couples.	Thematic analysis & discourse analysis
As above.	To identify which customs, rituals, beliefs and practices Zulu elders have experienced, and have used when consulted by their family members for assistance with their marriage problems.	1	In depth interviews with 9 Zulu elders.	Thematic analysis & discourse analysis

<b>Goal</b>	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Phase</b>	<b>Method</b>	<b>Analysis</b>
As above.	To understand which customs, rituals, beliefs and practices Zulu social workers who provide relationship counselling to Zulu couples have experienced, and which they use to assist their clients.	1	In depth interviews with 10 Zulu social workers.	Thematic analysis & discourse analysis
To indigenise marital counselling in order to offer best practices in professional relationship and marital counselling that are relevant and appropriate to Zulu couples.	To share the results of Phase 1 with two groups of social workers who specialize in relationship counselling, and to develop ideas for guidelines for relationship counselling with Zulu couples.	2	Two group discussions: Sharing information & group discussion with a) social workers at FAMSA Durban, and with b) social workers at FAMSA Pietermaritzburg	Thematic analysis

The theoretical framework used for this research is social constructionism, which has been discussed in depth in chapter one. Social constructionism, with its emphasis on examining how the social context informs and influences individual and groups' life experiences and values, and which is also informed by them in a recursive cycle, calls for the use of qualitative research whereby the information gained relates to the experiences of the research participants. As it is qualitative research the design is an integrated and interactive whole, as each component of the research has implications for the other components. This research is therefore descriptive and exploratory in

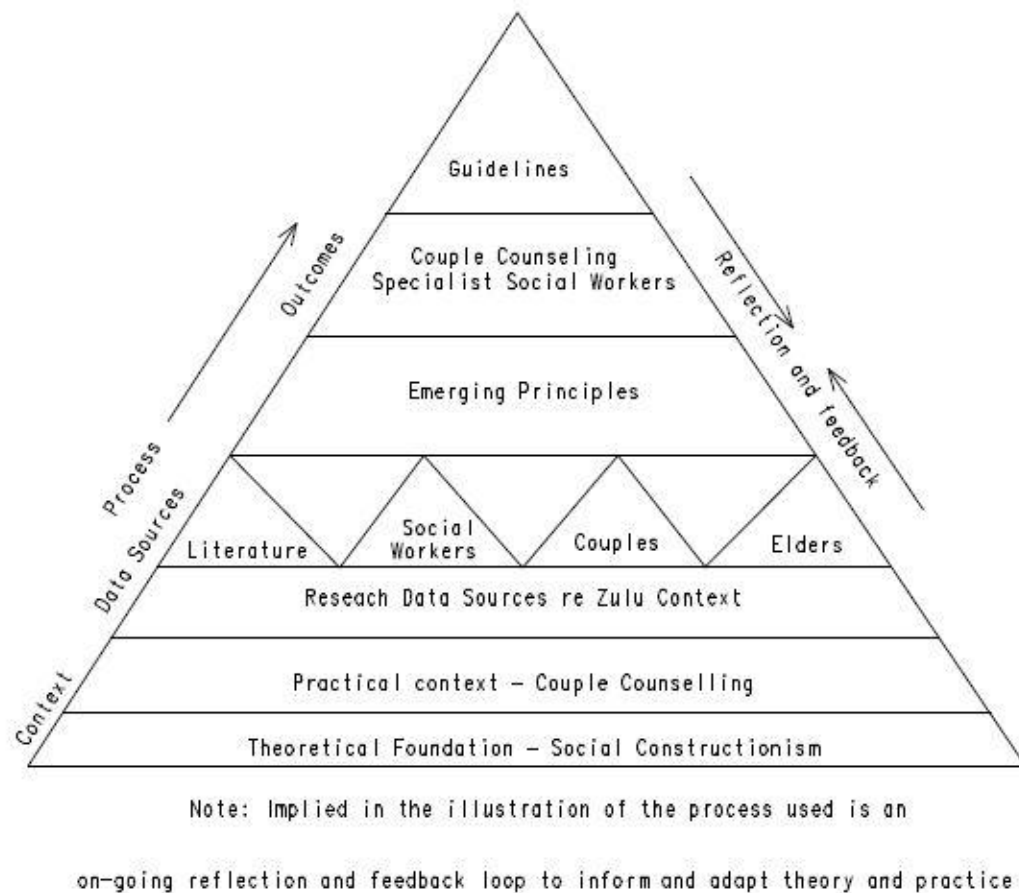
nature. It is descriptive as the research participants provided a rich description of their experience of Zulu marital and family life. It is exploratory as it “adopts an inductive approach as the researcher makes a series of particular observations and attempts to patch them together to form more general but speculative hypotheses.” (Durrheim, 2008:40). Besides, the information yielded through the conduct of this research, is novel, specific to Zulu couple counselling.

Relatively informal in-depth conversations were held with participants using an interview guide that explored certain themes. When interviewing, the basic interview guide was used to explore the participant’s own experience of Zulu family and married life, and the various beliefs and rituals that they found relevant. The family elders were also asked further questions about which of these they used when counselling their own family members; whilst the Zulu social workers were also asked which of these they found relevant when counselling Zulu couples and families (see Appendix page 26). Although using informal in-depth interviews was this study’s strength, it was also its challenge. I attempted to allow the interview to be guided by the participants so that they were able to relate their experiences of beliefs and rituals as they were growing up and as adults in their marriage; in their own words, at their own pace. At the end, if there were gaps according to the interview guide, I would ask further questions. Although this allowed for richness and depth of information, as occurs in qualitative research, it also resulted in very long interviews, which then needed a great deal of time and finances to record and analyse.

### **4.3 The Research Process**

Diagram 1 below depicts the research methodology and process adopted for this study, following which is an explanation thereof.

**Diagram 1: Diagram of Research Process**



#### **4.3.1 Selection of study's geographical area**

Although many authors speak about a distinct African world view that is common to all of Africa and even to African-American people, the possibility of exploring an African view of marriage was seen as too broad a perspective for this study. Just as Europe, the United States of America, Canada, and Australia may have a typical Western world view, yet each place has very different traditions, customs, rituals and beliefs that influence the way the people live in their relationships and solve their problems; so too the different African nations and tribes may follow the African world view, yet live differently in the way they conduct their relationships and solve their problems. As I live and work in KwaZulu Natal where the Zulu people have lived since King Shaka formed the Zulu nation in the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century, I decided to use

people in the samples who defined themselves as Zulu and who lived in both urban and rural areas of KwaZulu Natal.

#### **4.3.2 Sampling**

The aim of qualitative sampling is to provide rich information, and so there are two main considerations: appropriateness and adequacy. The samples that were needed to complete all aspects of this research were purposive. Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest and Namey (2005) explain that purposive sampling occurs when participants are selected according to preselected criteria that are relevant to the particular research question. Participants need to be chosen so that they are the best people to provide the required information; and to provide adequate sampling of the sources of information so that the research questions are addressed and a rich description is obtained (Fossey, et al., 2002:726). Purposeful sampling provides a rich description of data, which enhances its transferability (Babbie and Mouton, 2001). My study used purposive sampling as follows:

- **Sampling of phase 1 - the first sample of couples**

Informed consent was obtained from twelve heterosexual Zulu couples from KwaZulu Natal. There were two main criteria for inclusion in this phase of the study. Participants had to be over the age of 21 so they did not need legal consent to participate in this research, and needed to define themselves as being married for at least two years. This minimum marriage period allows time for couples to overcome any initial issues that living together brings.

Snowball sampling was used, initially using several different sources to develop the sample, in order to source a wide variety of participants in terms of their ages, length of marriages, and whether they live in rural or urban communities. Each spouse was offered the choice of being interviewed separately as their background family experiences would be different; and so that they could feel safe and at ease, revealing information confidentially if needed, in order for the information to be trustworthy. Snowball sampling, where participants could suggest other potential couples, was

used to obtain the sample because it is convenient and time efficient. My sister-in-law organised and introduced me to several contacts in rural areas, whilst my husband's colleague and other friends were the source of several contacts in the city of Durban. While sourcing participants I bore in mind the concept of sampling to redundancy, which consists of interviewing more and more people until the same themes and issues come up over and over again, so no new information can be gained by increasing the sample size (Durrheim, 2006).

- **Sampling of phase 1 – the second sample of family elders**

Nine individual family elders who have been consulted by their family members for marital assistance agreed to be interviewed as to their personal experience of growing up as Zulu; and which of the cultural rituals, practices and processes were used by them to assist the couple. They were also selected as a result of snowball sampling as described above.

- **Sampling of phase 1 – the third sample of Zulu social workers**

Snowball sampling was also be used to recruit 10 generic Zulu social workers of both sexes and of various ages and experience from agencies that are used as the first stop for assistance with family and relationship problems. Again, my sister-in-law was very helpful in contacting social workers since she is a nursing sister, and was matron in Ngwelazane Hospital near Empangeni, KZN - she knew the social workers there, and also has had contact with various other social workers in the area through her work as a trainer in courses in HIV/AIDS home-based care, as well as through her church and Rotary. Some of the social workers from generic agencies also do private work outside of office hours with the consent of their agency, and so I sourced some of the social work contacts at the meetings of the KZN Social Workers in Private Practice (SAASWIPP), as well as through the list of KZN supervisors working for UNISA. Additional social workers were sourced through friends. Social workers were interviewed as individuals so that their deeper concerns and experiences could be heard. However, their respective agencies were informed about this research so that

the process was transparent and open, and complied with the social work code of ethics.

- **Sampling of phase 2**

Social workers from FAMSA (the Family and Marriage Society of South Africa) in Durban and in Pietermaritzburg who specialise in relationship counselling were asked to be part of a general group discussion on the findings of Phase 1, for which C.P.D. points were obtained. Two groups were held – the one in Durban had 19 social workers and students who attended, whilst the Pietermaritzburg group had 7 social workers who attended. The purpose of these groups was to validate the findings in terms of their own life and work experience, and to generate ideas for best practice guidelines for relationship and marital counselling that can be used with Zulu couples.

- **Sourcing participants**

Sourcing the sample of research participants was the most difficult aspect of the study. Although using the snowball technique for sampling sounds easy and reliable, and many people were interested in this study and expressed willingness to source couples for interviews throughout the study period, this did not happen easily. As a result the collection of the data took much longer than expected. Fossey, Harvey, McDermott and Davidson (2002) warn that snowball sampling relies on the quality of the participants' social networks, and it can result in a homogenous sample. This may have resulted in bias in this study as many of the participants were employed, which is not a typical demographic of this province as mentioned previously. However, the type of employment varied widely. I was fortunate that my sister-in-law is well known in her community, and understood the purpose of the study and was able to “sell” it to her friends and colleagues. A Durban friend was able to explain the purpose of the study to several of her colleagues at work, and to persuade them to be interviewed. Other people, including close friends and my husband's associate, were able to find either a couple or a social worker for interviews. Throughout this process

I attempted to have a wide variety of participants, both in terms of age and whether they lived in a rural or urban community, in order to prevent a homogenous sample.

Although the same method of the in-depth interview was used in Phase 1 of this study, the criteria for the three samples were different; and in Phase 2 two group discussions were used, but with a sample with different criteria. Triangulation increases the richness and complexity of the data obtained, which Fossey elucidates as “...gathering information from multiple sources... in multiple ways... will illuminate different facets of situations and experiences and help portray them in their complexity” (Fossey et al 2002: 727).

### **4.3.3 Data collection using in-depth interviews**

In this section the instrument and the methods for data collection will be examined in detail.

#### **4.3.3.1 The research instruments – the in-depth interview guide**

Relatively informal in-depth conversations were held with participants using an interview guide (see Appendix page 26) that explored certain themes. The reason for choosing to collect data using in-depth interviews is that these allow the researcher to collect information about the participants’ feelings, experiences and beliefs in context and as naturally as possible through the art of conversation. Gray (2009) agrees that interviews are useful to explore feelings, attitudes and the meanings that the respondent ascribes to a situation. He also warns that one of the problems with this technique might be the ‘interviewer effect’ or bias where the manner in which the interviewer asks the questions influences the responses, which can affect the validity of the research. However, as Terre Blanche and Kelly (2006) stress, although interviews may appear comfortable and natural as we all have many conversations each day, interviewing is in fact a highly skilled process. In my case, I am an experienced interviewer as I have had 30 years experience as a counsellor and have been teaching interviewing skills to UNISA 4th year students for the last 20 years.



The translator used in the rural areas, my sister in-law, has also had many years experience as an HIV/AIDS counsellor. As a nursing sister working in the field of HIV/AIDS she understood the need for confidentiality.

A translator was used where necessary – in rural areas my sister-in-law acted as translator as the participants knew and trusted her – see below. Confidentiality and anonymity were explained to the participants; and this was maintained by interviewing them in a private place, not including any identifying details in the examples of data analysis, and by locking away the signed consent forms as well as the electronic and hard copies of interview transcripts.

The in-depth interview guide was used as the research instrument. As the researcher sought to obtain information about the participants' thoughts, feelings, beliefs and "social worlds" (Fossey, et al., 2002:727) it was necessary for the interview to be as unstructured as possible (Terre Blanche and Kelly, 2006); yet it was also important to ensure that all the relevant areas were covered, so the interview guide contained elements of structure that included themes that needed discussing – see Appendix page 26. The guide was piloted with two couples and one social worker who define themselves as Zulus and who fulfilled all the criteria for being research participants. It was adjusted according to the feedback given, as described below.

The Zulu couples were asked about their family and married life experiences, as well as the values, beliefs and practices that they found were important for Zulu marriage. The initial questions were open and broad to enable the respondents to give their opinions, and the follow-up questions built on their answers. Some biographical information - such as age; how long they have been married; where they lived growing up; where they live now; their level of education; their employment history; and the number, age and sex of their children - was asked as part of the interview, so that their opinions could be analysed against the life context of each participant. This is information that is very relevant; according to social constructionism their background context may influence their social values and beliefs, and the meaning they give to their experiences.

The family elders were asked similar questions to those described above about their own life and experience. The additional questions asked from the family elders, who were consulted by their respective families for marital counselling, focused on the particular advice, guidelines and practices that they recommended in response to the request for assistance; the reasons for giving these; and meaning that these have for them.

A similar interview guide to the first was used with the Zulu generic social workers. However, they were also asked further about the information, advice and practices that they have recommended to their clients that are based on Zulu traditional rites and customs; and to relate their counselling experiences to one or two examples.

#### **4.3.3.2. The pilot study**

In order to determine whether the interview guide was effective, and particularly whether the type of questions asked were both applicable and respectful, a small pilot study was completed. Two couples and one social worker were interviewed separately. Although they were of a similar age, the couples came from very different educational backgrounds: one couple had completed degrees whilst the other had not yet completed matric. All the pilot study participants commented that there was no particular need to change any of the questions because I had explained the reason for doing the interviews in detail, and it linked to their experience of the interview. They also said they liked the conversational, informal structure of the interviews. However, this technique did present me with a problem in that the interviews were very lengthy, and because I knew some of the pilot study respondents, sometimes the individuals started discussing other matters. Another problem was that one man had his own construction business and worked away from home, so it was difficult booking an appointment. He also had to take several work telephone calls during the interview, which interrupted the flow. The benefit of doing the pilot study was that it illustrated certain common values and beliefs; and it also highlighted questions that resulted in in-depth responses. The pilot study also indicated any gaps in the questions. Such gaps included questions around polygamy and practices relating to widows and forced marriages, called *ubugena*. These pilot interviews were analysed first using content analysis and then using discourse analysis to identify the type of themes that may arise in the research process.

#### **4.3.3.3. Collection of the data**

A number of difficulties arose from unforeseen circumstances after couples had agreed to be interviewed. Three people who were going to be part of the Zulu couple sample, were retrenched soon after their interviews, so they were unwilling to ask their spouses to be part of the study. Fortunately they had all assisted family and church members with marital problems, and so I had included these questions and was therefore able to use these interviews as part of the sample group of family elders. One woman went into labour on the day booked for her interview; another man went on a drinking binge and his whereabouts were unknown on the day of his interview. One woman's husband died before he could be interviewed, but as she had given marital advice to her family, this information could also be used for the family elders sample. A young family had to leave suddenly towards the end of the interview, as the interview was being held outside late one afternoon, and the mosquitoes started to bite their toddler. In the rural areas, we usually used my brother-in-laws' four-wheel drive vehicle as distances were long and the roads, which sometimes constituted only tracks, were very rocky. However, when my brother was using his vehicle for his own work, we had to use mine. On one such occasion my car was unable to drive on the dirt track, and so the respondent walked from her home to meet us where we were stuck, and the interview was conducted in limited time in the car. Transport was a major problem for the respondents. Several people worked away from their spouse, and so interviews could only occur on weekends, or when they were on leave. After several difficulties booking appointments that were not kept due to transport problems, I paid for the respondents' taxi fares. Another problem with collecting data was my difficulty in operating the tape recorder which the research participants would sometimes assist me to overcome!

#### **4.3.3.4. Collection of the data – in-depth interviews**

However, in spite of all these difficulties, and my occasional frustration and despondency, I really enjoyed doing the interviews. My pilot interviews had occurred

with couples that I know. The first interviews with strangers took place with the assistance of my sister-in-law, so she was on hand to clarify and explain issues, either to me or to the participant. As the interviews progressed I was able to identify, and then use, some of the non-verbal practices of respect. It is important to greet the person and to shake hands, either using the more involved African handshake, or a simple grasp of the fingers – I adjusted my action according to the person I was introduced to. As I am English, in my culture a greeting is often more casual, without a handshake. If I was administering the interview in their home, I was usually offered refreshments, which were brought on a tray. Only once was I not offered, and the man apologised, explaining that in the Zulu culture such an offering is very important and a sign of respect, but unfortunately due to his ill health and her lack of employment, they could not offer me anything. After this was explained to me, I then offered refreshments to those participants who were interviewed in my office.

Each respondent was welcomed and thanked for agreeing to participate. Although the respondents had either received a letter explaining the purpose of the research (see Appendix page 24 & 25) or myself or my sister-in-law had verbally explained the purpose in advance, all the respondents were given another letter explaining the purpose, and I explained it verbally again at the interview. They were then asked whether they had any questions about the purpose of the study after which they were all asked to sign that they understood the purpose of the research, were willing to participate, and that they were willing to be audio-taped. I also explained that they had the option of being seen together or separately. Most participants preferred to be interviewed together. I also explained that I would not use their names in my research report, although I might use their words to explain something.

This preamble not only ensured that the participants fully understood the purpose of the research and that they agreed to be interviewed and taped, (thus giving their informed consent as required), but also it served to break the ice and allowed the respondents to get to know me and build a relationship.

The individual interviews took about an hour and a half to two hours, whilst the joint interviews took between two to three and a half hours. My sister-in-law and I both found the interviews to be very intense and exhausting. To maintain the quality of the

process, as well as due to the travelling time and the length of the interviews, we tried to only have two interviews per day. As described above, interviews often were not being kept and my sister-in-law would try to organise some participants to be on call to fill any cancellations; thus respondents were warned that the timing of interviews was flexible. In order to see these rural participants, I would stay with my sister-in-law and her husband for a few days each visit; but as her assistance with this research meant that she was neglecting her own job and studies, these visits could not occur too frequently.

At the start of each interview I explained that I was looking for information about some of the rituals, beliefs, traditions and important aspects of Zulu life in marriage and the family, and therefore I was looking for information on their own family and married life. I warned them that for this reason I would be asking them lots of questions; and asked for and received their permission to do so at the outset of the interview. I also stressed that if I asked them a question that they were not comfortable with, they should feel free to say “Cathy, I don’t want to answer that question”. Explaining and asking permission to ask questions was important, as in the Zulu culture asking too many questions can be seen as disrespectful. I also gave them the opportunity to ask me any questions, and thanked them for agreeing to be part of the study. Several participants asked me questions about my work with social work students, whereas no-one asked further about my private practice in relationship counselling.

I then asked whether they would like to tell me about their childhood, or whether they wanted to tell me about when they met their spouse, with an overview of their marriage. Thus the question was open and broad, but specific about the information I was seeking. It also gave them the choice of where to start so that they could feel safe, and start with non-threatening information. As they spoke, I asked questions for clarification, and built further questions on their answers. These were often open-ended, such as “Please can you explain that?”; “Tell me more about that?”; or “What did you think or feel about that?” Once they had explained the various rituals they had experienced in both their childhood family, and in their marriage, they were asked other more general questions such as “What do you want your child/grandchild to

learn about being Zulu?"; "What are you proud of in being Zulu?"; "What are some of the difficulties you experienced as a result of Zulu rituals or beliefs?"

#### **4.3.3.5. Collection of data – translation**

Translation had been a concern of mine. It is important for the respondents to feel comfortable in sharing personal information, and so it is preferable that they speak in their home language. Unfortunately I do not speak Zulu, so I needed a translator. Twinn (1997), when looking at the effect of translation on the validity and reliability of qualitative data analysis, stressed that it is important for the research respondents to speak in their own language. In the city the respondents were fluent in English, however, in the rural areas my sister-in-law, who is Zulu and has been trained in counselling skills, acted as my translator. This worked well as she both knew and was trusted by the participants, or her contact was known and trusted by them. In the latter case, in all but one of the interviews, the contact would initially formally introduce the participant to both my sister-in-law and to me.

A possible criticism about using a family member to translate and be involved in a PhD research study is that she might be biased and lack objectivity, and that she may influence the participants to answer the questions according to either her or my agenda. However, in order for the translation to be as valid as possible, I had discussed the proposed interview process in detail with her. I also requested that she give a direct mirror of what was said, and not to elaborate or interpret it. To explain this, I used the following metaphor: if you make a stew, and then someone adds curry powder, it becomes a different dish. Many of the participants also were able to understand English, even if they could not speak it, and so they would follow what she said, nodding throughout, or clarifying where necessary.

Spangenberg (2003:52) discusses the use of a translator when doing cross-cultural counselling, and her comments are valid for the use of a translator in research as well. She stresses that the translator needs to model how to respect the person's culture by

including “aspects such as making or avoiding eye contact; who should sit, stand or walk first; and how a man should communicate with a woman and vice versa”. She suggests that the counsellor, or researcher in this case, should actively listen to both the client/participant and the translator, observing their body language, allow extra time for the research interview and have a post-interview discussion with the interpreter about the communication process. This was done in this research process.

However Clark (2006) warns that when using a translator it is important to realise when using social construction theory that the translator’s social history and context impact on the translation. “Even when the same language is being used, the meanings of words are differently coded with the values, beliefs and social representations of the speakers. In this sense any communication is an act of mediation of meaning, an act of ‘translation’. When two different languages are being mediated through translation, this process of negotiating meaning is compounded. It is not just words that are being negotiated but conceptual structures, cultural resources and subject positioning”.

I used my sister-in-law for all my translations so that there was consistency throughout the translations. This concurs with Twinn’s (1997) recommendation to only have one translator in order to enhance reliability; in her research when there was more than one translator, the variety of backgrounds of the different researchers resulted in subtle differences in the nuance of meanings as mentioned above. Interestingly however, no significant difference was found between those speaking English and those speaking their home language, in terms of the major categories generated during data analysis.

I organised for the audiotape of the interviews to be transcribed by a company that transcribes for the courts, and I asked them to check the translation. This affirmed that the translations were accurate.

#### **4.4 Data management**

The audiotapes of all the interviews were downloaded onto computer flash drives and were taken to the transcript company for typing, as I am unable to type adequately. They were also backed up onto another computer in case my computer crashed. The transcript company produced two printed and bound copies of each interview, as well as an electronic version. This provided the raw material for analysis. These scripts were stored in boxes in my office, which is locked when I am not present; and as is necessary, will be kept for five years.

#### **4.5 Data analysis – thematic analysis of in depth interviews**

The data was analysed using thematic analysis. Many respondents spoke of their experiences of similar rituals, so these descriptions were compared to determine the typical process that each ritual followed and the meaning that it had. Similarly, themes were sought in the answers to the more general questions.

“Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data”. It is independent of theory and epistemology, and therefore can be applied across a wide range of approaches, and through its theoretical freedom and flexibility, it can provide a rich, detailed and complex account of the data (Braun & Clarke 2006:78, 79). However, it is important to acknowledge the process and practice of the thematic analysis. In the past researchers have described immersing themselves in the data, when themes and concepts emerge or are discovered, but they have not explained the process whereby these were identified. Braun and Clarke (2006) therefore examine the specific steps that are necessary when using thematic analysis.

First it is important to examine what counts as a theme. Braun and Clarke define a theme as capturing “something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set” (2006: 82). The prevalence of a theme may occur both within each data item, and/or across the whole data set, but the relevance of the theme is determined by



whether it captures something important in relation to the research question. Thus in this study, I had to identify a possible theme according to whether there was a meaningful pattern in the respondents' answers, as well as whether this contributed to answering the research question: does this particular belief or practice contribute towards a meaningful marriage in Zulu culture?

In this study, I used a theoretically based thematic analysis (Braun and Clark 2006) driven by my interest and readings in this particular area, rather than asking general questions with no previous knowledge or reading, and then inducing and identifying the themes only from the data. Thus when introducing myself to the respondent/s at the beginning, I explained the history of my interest in Zulu marriage, its beliefs and practices. My experience with all the participants was that they appreciated this explanation as it was honest and upfront, and they could understand the reason why I was asking such questions.

Braun and Clarke (2006) describe six phases or steps that are necessary when doing thematic analysis. The first step was to actively immerse myself in the transcriptions of the data, looking for patterns and meanings. It was very time consuming, though very interesting, to read the interviews and refresh my memories with the notes I took at the time. The next step was to generate initial codes for potential themes. I used different colours to differentiate potential codes, and cut and pasted the relevant segments of the transcript underneath. If a part of the transcript fitted in more than one code, it was repeated under the relevant coloured heading. The next step was to sort the different codes into different themes. I found their suggestion of the use of thematic mind maps useful as it assisted me to look at the relationship between the codes, the sub themes and the themes. I looked at what words were used frequently, checking the transcript by using the search function on the computer. At the same time it was very confusing; I processed several thematic mind maps until I eventually found one that fitted the themes at both a practical and at a metaphysical level. After a lot of trial and error, intuitively the mind map was developed- see Diagram 2 below. Once this was done, I reviewed the themes to ensure that "data within themes should cohere together meaningfully, while there should be clear and identifiable distinctions between themes" (Braun and Clarke, 2006:91).

After re-examining the set of data, it was possible to name and define the themes. Braun and Clarke (2006) had a relevant warning – when identifying the essence of each theme it is important not to just paraphrase the content of the extracted data, but to identify what is interesting about the themes and sub-themes; and why this was so, linking it back to the research question, as well as with the broader theoretical assumptions. Finally, in the report it was important to provide evidence of the themes using interesting extracts of the data. However, it is important for the analysis to “go beyond description of the data, and make an argument in relation to your research question” (Braun and Clarke, 2006:93).

#### **4.6 – Data analysis - Discourse analysis of in depth interviews**

“All the forms of social constructionism take the constructive force of language as the principal assumption, and it is therefore the analysis of language and other symbolic forms that is at the heart of social constructionist research methods.” (Burr, 2003: 24). As this research is based on social constructionism, the interview is seen as “an arena within which particular linguistic patterns ....can come to the fore” (Terre Blanche and Durrheim, 2006:153). They also stress that whatever meanings come forth in these interviews, they are not only co-constructed by the interviewer and interviewees, and presumably the translator with the first and second sample, and the interviewer and social workers with the third sample, but are also the product of the larger social context. As Gray (2009) indicates the analysis looks at the structure and organisation of the language used in the interviews because these do not come forth only from the individual, but are viewed as being embedded in the culture. “The specific requirements of a social constructionist approach to such work has led to the development of a range of methods of analysis, referred to as discourse analysis” (Burr, 2003:24).

Thus when doing the discourse analysis I needed to reflect on the text by searching for things like recurrent terms, phrases and metaphors; who (which subjects) is being spoken about; and who is the “author” and who is the “listener” in the text (Terre Blanche and Durrheim, 2006:159). Discourses construct or manufacture particular truths through their narrative; and so discourse analysis tries to deconstruct the

narrative, looking at the effect of the narrative – what happens as a result? This is an important part of the analysis as the discourse may limit the opportunity for various actions. The context is also taken into consideration, both at a micro level within the interview or conversation, as well as at a macro level of the context of society and ideology. Finally, the effect the analyst has on his/her own analysis also needs to be taken into consideration through the process of reflexivity described below. (Terre Blanche and Durrheim, 2006:167).

Thus after I had analysed the themes, I re-examined the transcripts at a micro level in terms of metaphors that were used; as well as words, phrases and topics that were skirted around or avoided, such as sexuality. I also looked at the macro view of the discourse in terms of gender issues, age related issues and power issues.

#### **4.7 Reflexivity**

Gray (2009:580) describes reflexivity as “the monitoring by a researcher of her or his impact on the research situation being investigated”. He describes two types of reflexivity. Epistemological reflexivity occurs where the researcher reflects on their own assumptions and world view, and how this has impacted on the study, and may limit the process or the results. Secondly, personal reflexivity occurs where the researcher reflects on their own attitudes, values and beliefs and how these shaped the research; and then afterwards whether the research process has changed these ideas, values and beliefs. In order to combat this, if multi-researchers are not possible, it is necessary to keep a research log of any methodological decisions and changes and the reasons for them; and to also keep a personal diary or journal of reflections with regard to one’s values and interests, and to report on these in any research report. This has been done as I kept notes and discussed my experiences and reactions to these with my supervisors.

Thus for example, as both the interviews with the couples and with the various social workers were with Zulu people, there could be problems with epistemological reflexivity due to my cultural inexperience, and thus with my ability to notice and understand nuances of meaning. I was very aware of this and appreciative that Prof. Mkhize, the Dean of the School of Applied Human Sciences in the Faculty of Humanities and from the Discipline of Psychology, as well as various other Zulu

lecturers from the Discipline of Social Work were able to read my research proposal, and attended and gave valuable input into my colloquium presentation. I have also made a concerted effort to consult with several Zulu people from the time of conception and throughout the process of this research.

This has been particularly important as neither of the research supervisors are Zulu. I am also a white, British/Austrian, middle-class, middle-aged, urban female - this would have an impact on the research process, as my world view and beliefs and values with regards to, for example, age and gender could be very different from those of the Zulu participants. However, this difference is also a strength. As mentioned previously, the theoretical framework of this research is that of social constructionism, which indicates that people's beliefs, values and knowledge are grown through their family and cultural context; and that these beliefs and values are deeply internalised, so that there is no one view of reality.

Thus, someone coming from a different culture, with a multi-cultural background, will be sensitive to any differences in values, beliefs and norms that the respondents themselves take for granted, and which they may not be aware of. Throughout my life I have had regular contact with both my Austrian family and with my English colonial family, and I have had to adjust my beliefs, values and practices accordingly. I am therefore sensitive to possible differences in world view that may arise between people of different cultures; and I have enjoyed many discussions on this subject with my Zulu colleagues and my final year social work students, as well as with my Zulu sister-in-law.

When examining personal reflexivity, my experience of these cultural differences has certainly influenced my choice of research topic. I have been a relationship counsellor and trainer for about thirty years, and I have based my work on the skills and knowledge taught to me at university; through in-service training at FAMSA; and in workshops, conferences, training and reading groups more recently. These were all based on the Western world view, and were discussed in detail in chapter three. I assumed that there was enough commonality, as human beings in relationship, that this skill and knowledge were sufficient for me to work with people of all cultures, including Zulu couples. However, this has been challenged both by my sister-in-law

and my Zulu clients, as they attempted to explain the way they viewed the world differently, and how this translated into different values and practices in marriage. I therefore chose to explore this topic further, and to examine how this could influence the practice of marriage counselling. This research has also made me more sensitive and aware in my daily interactions with Zulu people.

It is therefore very important to be aware of both epistemological and personal reflexivity throughout the research process. Reading around the topic gave me the opportunity for a lot of reflection about my understanding of the topic, and how it impacted on me. Obviously when interviewing research participants, reflexivity has a major impact. Fortunately there was sufficient trust and rapport that misunderstandings were clarified immediately. The need for reflexivity is developed further in analysis. As Braun and Clarke (2006:80) stress, when analysing data in qualitative research, it is important for the researcher to fully understand the different methods of analysis, so they can make an active choice as to which to use. They also emphasise that it is important that the researcher understand “the *active* role the researcher always plays in identifying patterns/themes, selecting which are of interest, and reporting them to the readers”. This active role is impacted by both epistemological and personal reflexivity.

#### **4.8 Group discussion of results**

The second final phase of the research built on the findings from the thematic and discourse analyses in the first phase. The purpose of this second phase was to develop best practice guidelines for marriage counselling with Zulu couples. Input on African philosophy and world view was given, and then these findings were described to the two groups of social workers, who are experienced relationship counsellors, and discussed in the group to confirm the themes noted from their own personal experience and from marriage counselling; as well as to explore possible guidelines for relationship counselling with Zulu couples (See Appendix page 30 to 34). The two groups with the social workers were taped, and the data was analyzed according to the common themes that arose, using thematic analysis. Using a discussion group with

these experienced social workers allowed for a rich and deep exchange of ideas, which helped build guidelines for better practice. Thus analysis of these themes resulted in a practical product. The interpretations were discussed with the social workers to ensure credibility, authenticity and trustworthiness.

As a result, the conclusions obtained from the thematic and discourse analysis can be put into action; and can be applied in the future when counselling Zulu couples, teaching social work students, and using divorce prevention programmes.

#### **4.9 Issues of trustworthiness**

Merriam (2009 :213-214) stresses that “one of the assumptions underlying qualitative research is that reality is holistic, multidimensional, and ever-changing; it is not a single, fixed, objective phenomenon waiting to be discovered, observed, and measured..... what is being investigated are people’s constructions of reality - how they understand the world”.

The trustworthiness of qualitative research therefore needs to be assessed through its credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Babbie and Mouton, 2001; Fossey, et al., 2002). Strategies such as triangulation, adequate engagement in data collection, the researcher’s reflexivity, peer examination and discussion, an audit trail, thick rich descriptions and maximum variation of sample selection all increase the trustworthiness of a qualitative study (Merriam 2009: 228).

Fossey, et al., (2002) suggest that as qualitative research aims to privilege the participants’ perspectives, meaning, actions and contexts, the core measurement of the quality of the research needs to be whether the researcher has been able to authentically represent and interpret the participants’ perspectives and whether the findings are congruent with the data and social context from which they are derived (2002:723). The multiple voices or perceptions about the study’s focal issues are reflected in the research report through the many quotes of the participants resulting in a rich, thick description that is dependable and transferable (Williamson, 2006). In

this study an attempt was made to ensure that the research participants' voices were heard through the use of several long quotes that illustrated not only the words that were spoken, but also through their length, attempted to illustrate the tone and cadence of their speech, as well the emphasis and repetition that occurred.

In order to determine the credibility of this study and have “adequate engagement in data collection” (Merriam 2009:219), it was necessary to firstly have prolonged engagement with several respondents until data saturation occurs – in this study 43 people were interviewed in depth in the first phase . Secondly triangulation was used – diverse input was collected from different sources (Merriam 2009), which in this case were the samples of couples, the elders and the social workers. This input was also confirmed and validated by both groups of FAMSA social workers resulting in stronger trustworthiness.

An attempt was made to increase transferability by having maximum variation when selecting the study sample. However, due to the use of snowball sampling and the resulting bias, this may not have been completely effective. However, when examining the biographical information on the different samples in the next chapter, it can be seen that there was a fair degree of variation.

Dependability that enhances the trustworthiness of the research results from having an audit trail. This allows independent readers to “authenticate the findings of a study by following the trail of the researcher” (Merriam 2009:222). A log and notes of the process of the interviews was kept, as were the audiotapes and transcripts of the interviews in phase one; and the audiotapes of the groups from phase 2. Transferability refers to the extent that the reader can understand and evaluate that which is reported. Thus there was both methodological and interpretive rigor, which also contributed to the dependability of the study. Finally confirmability was achieved through peer review and discussions with colleagues, consultation with supervisors and having a professional typescript agency to transcribe data.

Another method of ensuring that the research study is trustworthy is to ensure the reflexivity of the researcher through self-reflection as discussed above in 4.7

As a result, the above mentioned aspects that relate to the research design and research process were formulated and maintained throughout this research study in order to deepen the trustworthiness.

#### **4.10 Ethical considerations**

When working with humans it is imperative to be ethical and to do no harm (Gray2009) and in order to ensure this, all research conducted at the University of KwaZulu-Natal has to receive ethical clearance before proceeding. Ethical clearance was received on 16<sup>th</sup> January 2013 (See page ).

There are several aspects to doing ethical research with humans. The first, as Merriam (2009) suggests, is the stance of the researcher: their training, experience, competence and personal integrity. Thus although there are set ethical guidelines, which the researcher needs to comply with and will be discussed below, the researcher's own ethics will determine how incidents in the field are dealt with, and how the information obtained is analysed and disseminated. As Merriman (2009) stresses, researchers are seen as participants in the process of the whole research, and therefore need to be self-aware of how they impact the process, and so need to use reflexivity effectively. Snyman and Fasser (2004) concur with this: when using a theoretical postmodern stance, such as social constructionism, ethics may be compromised by the therapist (researcher)'s own perceptions, which are influenced by their own norms, values, class, gender and ethnicity. There may also be a difference in power between the researcher and the research participant, which could cause ethical issues. Similarly boundaries may be crossed, particularly when using in-depth interviewing, as the researcher may become the therapist if the research questions evoke the participant's problems; so it is important to maintain the role of researcher and refer the person for the help they need appropriately (Gray 2009). In this study the contact details of FAMSA were on the letter given to the participants, and in one case where the participant asked for counselling, a colleague's contact details were given. As a result of the fluidity of doing research from a social constructionist point of



view, it is extremely important that the researcher is self aware and has high integrity in order to manage the dynamic relationship of researcher-participant (Snyman and Fasser, 2004). There are two other role players in the research process – the funder of the research, and the university itself. In spite of the expense of the transcriptions, I was fortunate to be able to fund the research myself. Potential ethical issues could result from the question ‘Who owns the research?’ and how do the politics of research impact the process and the findings. This is part of the minefield that the researcher needs to be aware of in maintaining an ethical stance in the research process.

The second aspect to consider about ethical research practice relates to the participants in the study. Alston and Bowles (2003); Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest and Namey (2005); and Babbie and Mouton (2001) all discuss the main aspects of ethical research as follows. There needs to be autonomy for the participants, which includes the right to decide whether to participate so that they are voluntary participants, and thus they need to understand what the research is about and to give informed consent. No inducements are allowed to be offered as this will contaminate the results. In this study the participants were informed of the purpose of the study when they were approached for an interview, they were given a letter that explained the purpose, and it was explained again at the start of the interview when they were asked to sign the informed consent form. They were told about the right to privacy and were offered individual interviews, as opposed to couple interviews, if they preferred. They were informed about confidentiality, and told that their identifying details would not be used, although their words may be used to explain something.

They were asked if they minded me using a tape recorder for this purpose, so their permission was sought before commencing with recording. They were also informed that they could stop the research interview at any time. Examples of this occurrence are when the toddler was bitten by mosquitoes, and when time was short after my car was stopped by a very rocky road, and so the family elder had to walk to the car for her interview because both my sister-in-law and I have health problems with our legs and could not walk to her home.

As mentioned the main issue is to do no harm – non-maleficence. In this study there was no stigmatisation, or secondary victimisation; there was no task or procedure that

diminished self respect; and there was no deception. Only one person appeared to find the questions about her marriage stressful, and she was referred to FAMSA for marriage counselling. Ethically, in fact, it is important to do good - beneficence; and Alston and Bowles (2003) mention that as research is mentioned in many social workers' Code of Ethics this can include empowering the participant and being fair and just. The final consideration for ethical research is whether it is making a positive contribution to knowledge. Most of the research respondents commented that they were pleased that they were helping the social work students to learn about Zulu beliefs, values, and practices so that they could help others.

The third consideration about ethical research relates to the data collected. Due to confidentiality, it needs to be kept stored and locked up for 5 years in case the raw data is needed. Babbie and Mouton (2001) suggest removing any identifying information as soon as possible in order to maintain confidentiality, in case for whatever reason, the court wants access to the transcripts during this time. After the 5 year period, any hard copies need to be disposed of by shredding the transcripts, and the electronic data needs to be destroyed. This study's data is in a locked room when I am not using it, and will be stored in a locked cupboard afterwards.

#### **4. 11 Limitations of the study**

Despite efforts to enhance the trustworthiness of the study, it must be acknowledged that there are several limitations to this study due to its methodology. Some of these have been discussed in the body of the text above, but are summarised here.

The first limitation is that this study could only be conducted in a small area of KwaZulu-Natal. Although, as mentioned in Chapter 1, the Zulu nation consists of the largest tribal group in South Africa and they are based in KwaZulu Natal, this study was exploratory, and thus the sample was small and consisted only of Zulu people

living in Durban and in the centre and surrounding rural areas of a town in Northern Zululand.

The second methodological limitation of this research study is due to the method of sampling. Purposive sampling was used and snowball sampling was the method for obtaining a sample. This may have resulted in some bias in the sample as the people who agreed to participate in the study may not represent the general population of the area. The youngest couples in Durban, and the youngest couple in Zululand, were in their early thirties, so younger couples' opinions were not heard. The people who sourced the sample both in Durban and in the town in Northern Zululand and its surrounding area, were all employed, and so their sample base may have been biased towards being employed as well. This is mentioned, in particular, as most people were employed in this study, which is not a typical demographic of KwaZulu Natal as mentioned in Chapter 1.

The third limitation of this study is also due to snowball sampling. As mentioned above and in the following chapter, in spite of a lot of interest and promises of assistance, only a quarter of the married couples came from Durban. This difficulty in sourcing Durban couples meant that collecting data took much longer than expected.

The fourth methodological limitation, as mentioned previously, was that the research participants' home language was isiZulu, which I do not speak. Fortunately my sister-in-law assisted me with translations where necessary, and these translations were checked by the staff of Typescript (Pty) Ltd.

The fifth limitation was that as a white, British/Austrian, middle-class, middle-aged, urban female, I may have not understood various nuances of meaning in the language and in the culture. However, reflexivity was taken into consideration, and regular consultations with Zulu people occurred throughout the study to avoid this problem. In particular when Mr M.N. reacted in shock to my question about *ubuntu*, I clarified this with the translator immediately, and then discussed it with Ms Mkhize from the Department of Zulu at the UKZN, and with my colleagues at FAMSA Durban, and with FAMSA Pietermaritzburg.

#### **4.12 Summary of chapter**

The theoretical framework of this study is based on social constructionism, and therefore a qualitative research design is appropriate. The study is descriptive, as the participants described their experiences growing up and their marriage as Zulu people; and also exploratory, as I used this information to interpret the data using thematic and discourse analysis so as to develop guidelines for marriage counselling with Zulu couples. The sampling is purposive in that three groups who described themselves as Zulu were used in the first phase. The first sample group consisted of couples who indicated that they had been married for at least two years; the second sample group consisted of elders who had given advice to their family; and the third group consisted of Zulu social workers who are employed by organisations in the community. In the second phase this information and the themes derived from it were shared with the FAMSA (Family and Marriage Society of South Africa) social workers in Pietermaritzburg and Durban who specialise in marriage counselling, in order to develop best practice guidelines for couple counselling with Zulu couples. An in depth interview guide was used to collect data after the guide was piloted. The research participants were sourced and a translator was used in the interviews, where necessary. The interviews were tape recorded and then transcribed and analysed. Reflexivity, issues of trustworthiness and the ethical considerations of the study, were discussed in this chapter in order to illustrate the depth of rigor in the research.

## **CHAPTER FIVE DATA ANALYSIS**

### **5.1. Introduction**

In the first part of this chapter, I present and discuss the results of the three categories of interviews: interviews with twelve Zulu married couples; interviews with nine Zulu family elders who had given a family member relationship advice; and interviews with ten Zulu social workers. I then discuss possible marriage problems that arise from the information given. The research objectives that these interviews attempted to answer which are repeated from Chapter 1 include:

- to determine and identify which values, customs, rituals and practices Zulu couples have found relevant during childhood, courtship, wedding and marriage, and how these give meaning to their relationship.
- to determine and identify which values, customs, rituals, processes and practices Zulu elders have used when consulted by their family members for assistance with their marriage problems.
- to determine and identify how social workers who work generically use particular Zulu values and practices to assist their clients.

In order for the participants voices to be heard and understood, as well as to ensure that the research complied with acceptable standards of research rigor, it was important to ensure that it was trustworthy, with the interviews being audio-recorded and then transcribed. If a translator was used, the translation was checked.

In the second part of this chapter, I discuss some of the ideas and input given by social workers from FAMSA Durban and FAMSA Pietermaritzburg, both of which are N.G.O's specialising in marriage counselling. The rationale for selecting social workers from this NGO has been noted in an earlier chapter.

## 5.2 Biographical Information

In order for the information obtained to relate to its context, as is stressed in social constructionism, it is necessary to be aware of the biographical information of the respondents. As mentioned in the previous chapter, snowball sampling was used, and this impacted the context of the respondents in that they were often of a similar age and social background as the person who was the source of the contact. Their marital status, approximate age, whether they have an occupation, sex, religion and where they live are described below:

**Table 5.1 Biographical Information – Married Zulu Couples**

Date of interview	Respondent	Age	Employed	Sex	Place
15/08/13	Mr T.M.	50+	Unemployed – ill	M	Rural
15/08/13	Mrs R.M.	40+	Unemployed	F	Rural
16/08/13	Mrs B.N.	71	Employed	F	Town
16/08/13	Mr C.N.	79	Self employed	M	Town
06/12/13	Mrs B.M.	58	Self employed	F	Town
	Mr B.M.	62	Employed	M	Town
30/12/13	Mr M.N.	30+	Self employed	M	City
30/12/13	Mrs D.N.	30+	Student	F	City
06/04/14	Mr G.X.	38	Employed	M	City
06/04/14	Mrs A.X.	36	Employed	F	City
11/04/14	Mr M.	49	Employed	M	Town
	Mrs.L.	50	Employed	F	Town
11/04/14	Mr M.M.	30	Employed	M	Rural
	Mrs H.M.	27	Unemployed	F	Rural

<b>Date of interview</b>	<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Employed</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Place</b>
11/04/14	Mr T.M.	41	Employed	M	Rural
	Mrs V.M.	37	Unemployed	F	Rural
30/05/14	Mrs N.N.	35	Employed	F	Town
14/08/14	Mr S.S.	40	Employed	M	Town
15/08/14	Mr B.M.	56	Employed	M	Rural
	Mrs E.M.	46	Unemployed	F	Rural
16/08/14	Mr P.M.	58	Employed	M	Rural
16/08/14	Mrs T.M.	47	Employed	F	Rural
19/07/14	Mr C.M.	42	Employed	M	City
19/07/14	Mrs N.M.	35	Employed	F	City

As can be seen above, there was only one person who was in their twenties, six out of the 24 respondents were in their thirties, and six were in their forties, whilst five were in their fifties, one was in their sixties, and two were in their seventies, so the spread in terms of age was wide, which added depth and breadth to the study.

The difficulty experienced in finding couples here in Durban as mentioned in the previous chapter, is evident from the above tables. Only three couples (a quarter of the total couples) came from the city. Thus in spite of a great deal of interest and many promises, the potential respondents from the city did not follow through by availing themselves for interviews. The remainder three-quarters of the couples came from Northern Zululand. Half of these (3/8 of the total number of couples) came from a small town and its surrounding townships, whilst the other half of the couples (3/8 of the total number of couples) came from homesteads in deep rural areas. The possible reason for the larger number of interviews in this area is that my sister-in-law (the source of this sample) is well known and trusted in the community. She was the senior matron at a big local hospital, and now owns and manages an HIV/AIDS home-based care and basic counselling training company which is accredited with the Health and Welfare Seta. She is also very involved in her church and with Rotary. She inspired this study, and therefore knows the goals and objectives well. As a result, she was

able to persuade the respondents to participate in this research. She therefore explained the purpose of the study when booking appointments, and escorted me to the respective homes, acting as translator when necessary, as discussed previously. I am extremely grateful for her assistance as this research would not have been possible without her.

As mentioned previously the source of the snowball sample influences the type of respondents. Most of the men in the couples were employed or self employed which is not a typical demographic of the area as seen in chapter one, whilst some of their wives were unemployed as they were housewives and looked after the children. The types of employment however varied considerably: several people worked in the medical professions, but some were working as skilled artisans, a quarter were self employed, and at least half of them worked as unskilled labourers.

The following table illustrates the biographical information of the research participants who were family elders and had given members of their family marital advice.

**Table 5.2 Biographical Information – Zulu family elders**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Married</b>	<b>Employment</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Place</b>
15/08/13	Mrs N.M.	Widowed	Retired	F	Rural
15/08/13	Mr M.M.	Married	Employed	M	Town
16/08/13	Mrs T.V.	Widowed	Retired	F	Town
5/12/13	Mrs A.M.	Married	Employed	F	Rural
5/12/13	Mrs T.M.	Married	Retired	F	Town
17/12/13	Mrs P.D.	Married	Employed	F	City
07/01/14	Mrs P.M.	Married	Employed	F	City
08/01/14	Mr N.M.	Married	Employed	M	City
14/04/14	Mrs J.M.	Divorced	Employed	F	City

All the elders who had given their families relationship advice were in their late fifties and older. Four were from the city whilst three were from a town and two were from



the rural area. Two were widowed and one person was divorced. The remainder were married. Those from the city were all employed at the time of the interview. Unfortunately soon after the interviews three of them were retrenched. Three of the family elders were retired, but were still very active in voluntary work in the community.

The following table illustrates the biographical information of the third sample of the first phase of the research study which is that of social worker who are employed in the community and have assisted families and married couples. This table therefore includes where they are employed.

**Table 5.3 Zulu Generic Social Workers**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Agency</b>	<b>Rural/urban</b>
4/12/13	N.M.	Female	45	Hospital	Town
07/02/14	M. M.	Male	30	Hospital	City
12/03/14	S.M.	Female	42	Prisons & UKZN	City
09/04/14	B.S.	Female	47	Private practice	City
10/04/14	N.N.	Female	40	SANCA	Town
10/04/14	N.M.	Female	45	Hospital	Town
15/04/14	H.M.	Female	36	Prisons	City
30/05/14	L.M.	Female	52	SAPS	Town
30/05/2014	T.M.	Female	36	NGO	Rural
05/06/14	N.M.	Female	56	Hospital	City
05/06/14	M.T.	Female	44	Hospital	City

Although half of the social workers interviewed worked in a hospital, there are three hospitals represented: one in the rural area, and two in an urban area. All are government hospitals, but one is a specialised hospital, one is a district hospital and the third is a regional and tertiary hospital. Half of the social work respondents worked in the city, whilst the other half worked in either in a town or in the rural area. Only one male social worker agreed to be interviewed and the rest were female.

### 5.3 Over view of themes and subthemes – Phase 1

In this section of the chapter, I analyse the themes and discourses identified in the interviews from a social constructionist point of view which, as mentioned in Chapter one, suggests that different people attach different significance to different aspects of their lives, and they notice and attach meaning to different nuances according to their world view and social background.

The remainder of this chapter examines the main themes and discourses that I noticed that arose from the interviews with the research participants, bearing in mind as mentioned above, as a middle- aged, professional, white woman, I may be aware of different themes and nuances to other analysts. Also of note here is that the analysis of data was discussed with my supervisors, with colleagues at the ASASWEI (Association of South African Social Work Education Institutions) conference in 2014, with my sister-in-law Nomathemba Haselau, with the FAMSA Durban and FAMSA Pietermaritzburg social workers, and *ubuntu* in particular was discussed with Ms Mkhize from the Department of Zulu to obviate the effect of personal bias.

In this chapter the quotes mentioned by respondents will not only be used as examples of the theme, but will also be used in order that their specific words and phrases can be taken into consideration. The quotations used are fairly lengthy so that their specific language is acknowledged, especially as repetition, sometimes using the same or similar words, is often used to emphasise a point. Sometimes several quotes are used to determine the similarities and differences, as well as subtle meaning in their wording. This is in accordance with the constructionist view that affords significance to the choice of words, their nuances and how and when they were mentioned (Henning 1990). When a Zulu word was mentioned during the interview I asked the respondent and/or the translator to spell it, and to explain it. These spellings and explanations are given in the text for the convenience of the reader, as well as in the glossary in the beginning of this thesis. However, some people would use a popular or shortened word rather than the official word in their interview, and so their own words are used in the examples of the quotes. In order to give evidence of triangulation of

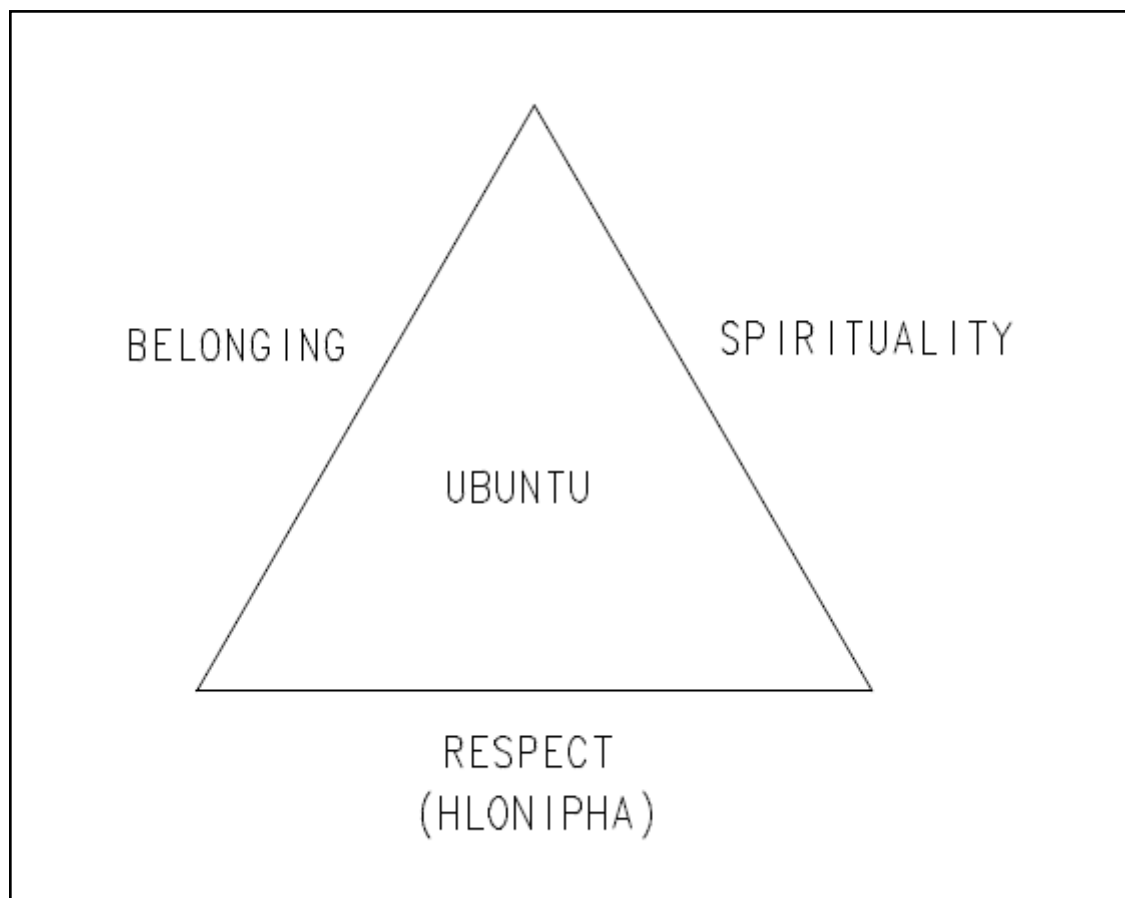
the different samples, I tried to use examples from the different samples to show where there are both similarities and differences in their responses, although as mentioned above there were mainly similarities.

There were four main themes that the researcher identified which were:

- (1) belonging;
- (2) spirituality;
- (3) respect (*hlonipha*)
- (4) *ubuntu*.

There was a great deal of overlap in these four themes, and they all appeared to be weighted with the same degree of importance, hence they were regarded as “equal” to each other. As a result the researcher saw the themes as an equilateral triangle with the central space as *ubuntu*. They each contributed to the strength and depth of meaning of each other, and so, like a triangle, each side relied on each other – if one aspect was unavailable, it impacted negatively on the others. See diagram below.

**Diagram 2: Themes Noted in the Interviews**



Each of these themes included sub-themes which are necessary to understand in order to take them into cognisance when doing couple therapy. Possible problem areas that could cause issues in relationships are identified in my analysis and critical comment.

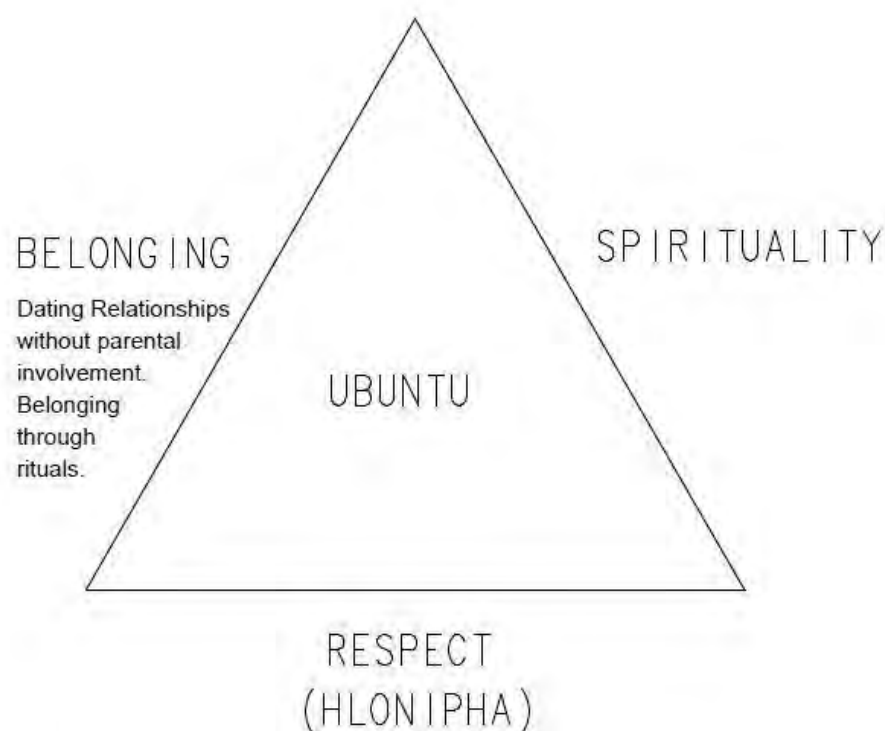
### **5.3.1 Belonging**

In discussing the practices that were meaningful to the research participants in relation to marriage, the concept of belonging to a particular family was seen as foundational and was a constant recurring discourse. Interestingly, it was not mentioned a great deal in the literature, except in articles and theses by African writers such as Muruthi (2009), Masanga (2006), Osei-Hwedie (2007) and Ince (2009). This indicates that it is

important to African writers, but not necessarily accorded the same level of importance by authors from other ethnic groups. Possible reasons for this may be as a result of these authors' own socialisation. As mentioned in chapter one and in chapter three, according to the theory of social constructionism, we construct our reality based on the social context that we are exposed to when growing up. With the Western world view highlighting individualism, and therefore examining the stages towards the development of personal identity, this concept may take priority for Western authors. Communality is the basis for the African world view, and so the sense of belonging to a particular social group may have greater emphasis. This does not imply however that the African and the Western writers did not mention the alternate point of view, but their own world view may have resulted in them prioritising the concept into which they were socialised.

The following were sub themes that related to the theme of belonging, and are illustrated in the following diagram:

**Diagram 3: Belonging**



- **Dating relationships without parental involvement**

The modern, Western way of dating where teenagers and young adults socialise and date a few partners prior to deciding to get married, and where their parents tend to know about and monitor these relationships, is very different from both the past and the present way teenagers and young adults in the Zulu community date. Although the Zulu people allow marriage based on love, the parents only know about these relationships when the couple are planning to get married and plan to start negotiations for *ilobolo*. As Hunter (2005:395) indicates “While parents set firm limits, notably against pregnancy, they were rarely involved in the day to day socialisation of young men or women’s sexuality.”

In my opinion the first reason for this difference is that historically in the Zulu community there were alternative structures in place to inform and monitor sexual practices. When looking at how couples meet and get to know each other, in the past the community was organised according to age groups, and so a girl from an older age group (*amaqhikiza*) who may have already selected a boyfriend, would chaperone the younger female group and inform them of acceptable sexual practices (Hunter, 2004; Hunter, 2005). As boys and girls lived fairly separate lives, they would see each other at community functions like weddings and funerals, amidst a large group of people. However it was only after the girl’s *umemulo* ceremony that she would be allowed to date (see below) and where she would be further instructed about sexual practices such as the use of thigh sex, *ukusoma*, (Hunter, 2005; Shange, 2012). According to Hunter (2005) to start the process of courting, the boy would initiate the romance by making advances towards the girl, to *shela* her. If a young girl liked a boy, she would let the older girl know, who would then let the boy that she had *qoma*’d (chosen) him. Historically, there was a process of the girl making and giving a beaded necklace, *ucu*, to the boy (Jolles, 2006; Winters, 2008; Hunter, 2004; Hunter, 2005) who would then put a “*doek*”, or scarf (similar to that used by women who are married to show their marital status) in the window to show that the couple were dating (Hunter 2004). This practice was mentioned by the couple Mr C.M. and Mrs N.M. The findings of this study revealed that this way of young people meeting each other is changing as it was evident that couples met without supervision by an older peer, in a variety of venues –

examples include: Mr M.N. met his wife D.N. at church, Mrs H.M. a social worker met her husband at university, Mrs P.M. a family elder met her husband on the way to the train station after work. However what remains the same is that they did not initially inform their parents that they were dating until the man was ready to start *ilobolo* or dowry negotiations, at which time both families would become involved. One of the respondents Mr G.X. (the husband in a couple) explained this process as follows:

Mr G.X.: *[If you are living away from home] whether you dating, whether you seeing one you seeing twenty, they don't know what's happening. They won't know.....*  
*But if you stay at home, you working and you stay at home, then they will know that, they will know that.....But until such time that you go with her to your parents home then that's when they will know that there is somebody and she comes from [a particular place]....*

Mrs T.M. (social worker) described how she only told her parents that she was dating when her husband was ready to pay *ilobolo*.

Mrs T.M. :*There's no specific reason, it's our culture, you know, black people, they don't tend to open up about their relationship, especially before you get married.... It's fine to tell a friend, or, like, maybe your, your cousins, but not to your parents, it's not easy to open up.*

Mr G.X. and Mrs A.X. had contact with each other's family prior to the commencement of the discussions about *ilobolo*. Unknown to either family, Mr G.X. and Mrs A.X. were dating regularly. Mrs A.X. was visiting him when Mr G.X.'s sisters happened to come to visit him on their way to Johannesburg, and so they all met unexpectedly for the first time. What made this visit special was that soon after this first meeting, Mrs A.X.'s mother died, and due to the relationships that were built at this first meeting, her present husband and his sisters came to the funeral. Mrs A.X. describes how his helping with the funeral arrangements impressed her brothers and helped facilitate the development of all of their relationships.

*And with my brothers, cause I got lots of brothers. They started to like him on my mother's funeral. That's how they got to know about him. He was very busy, like he was helping out, you know, with the funeral arrangements. Then that's how they got to know him, and they loved him. They said this is a good man ...*

The aforementioned example of prolonged contact between one person's family and the other individual prior to the process of *ilobolo* is not the norm. However Mr X's assistance with the funeral arrangements showed his respect for her family and their spiritual traditions, and it also showed *ubuntu*. As a result, he was accepted by her family as her suitor.

One of the reasons that parents are not informed about potential boyfriends in my opinion therefore is that the relationship only becomes relevant when *ilobolo* is initiated and there is the potential of the bride to start to belong to the groom's family.

In my opinion, the second reason that the parents are only informed of the couple's relationship when marriage is considered, and do not monitor their love interests earlier in the relationship, is because it is only then that their child's potential partner would be joining and belonging to the family. It is only at this point that the parents would do an in depth investigation into the potential partner's family background.

Mrs T.M. a social worker, indicated that her parents only agreed to start the process of *ilobolo* once they knew more about him.

*Mrs T.M.: They don't get any permission from me as to how much must we charge your boyfriend for your lobola, no, it doesn't happen like that. But they do, like, want to find out, like, what is this person doing, where's he working, does he have any children, parents, you know, that ...*

The afore mentioned statement is borne out by a point raised by a social work respondent Mrs L.M. who said that her father even travelled from Pretoria to Zululand to get to know her prospective husband's family as quoted below:



Mrs L.M.: *Well they, they felt that, oh, they're not used to Zulu people, you know, they were anxious to know, are they reliable, honest, will I have a future, will be a, a lasting relationship, you know, they were concerned, so my father that side, as they were negotiating, he even came this side.....Then he realized a few things about the family, he said, no, it's a united family, mother, father, they are there and the children, and the, the way they did their things, you could see that they are a family, even they did things maybe the different way, but because he could also experience that they, they were Christians...*

These quotes are interesting in several respects. Both sets of parents were obviously concerned about their daughters and so they wanted to know more about the potential groom's family, their relationships, their lifestyle and their religion, and they were content with what they found because she came from a similar background. Thus she would be able to adjust well to her new family, and to belong there.

This vetting of the Zulu woman's intended spouse's family is of extreme importance when viewed against the fact that after marriage she now belongs to the family and clan of her husband, and that there are very strict mores against divorce, as mentioned below.

- **Belonging through rituals**

Fiese, Tomcho, Douglas, Josephs, Poltrock and Baker (2002: 382) defined rituals as involving highly “symbolic communication and convey ‘this is who we are’ as a group....and [this] provides a sense of belonging.... Rituals also provide continuity in meaning across generations with the anticipation for repeat performance and an investment that ‘this is how our family will continue to be’... When rituals are disrupted, there is a threat to group cohesion.”

In the Zulu culture there is a cyclical element to this sense of belonging. The ancestors are an integral part of the family and are honoured in the family rituals, so family elders are expected to teach the children about good, strong family and

community practices, rituals and values, so that when they die, they have the honour of becoming an ancestor themselves (Masanga, 2006; Bojuwaye, 2013). However, as described in chapter two, the ancestors will only look after those family members whom they know and have been introduced to, and who acknowledge and communicate with them about the events in their lives regularly. If this is not done, bad luck will result (Boyuwaye, 2013). As a child goes through the rites of passage and is socialised into the communal living of an African extended family and village, the communication with the ancestors is an important part of the traditional process. As Edwards (2010:213) mentions “ancestral reverence... is fundamental for spirituality. Such religious practice brings experiences of belonging and transcendence.” This aspect is discussed further later in this chapter.

This study revealed many such rituals that punctuate the rites of passage as described below:

➤ ***Imbeleko***: introduction of a baby to the ancestors

The family was described as consisting of living people from both the maternal and paternal sides, as well as the ancestors or *amadlozi* from both sides. Thus when introducing a child to the ancestors at about a year old in a ritual called the *imbeleko*, both maternal and paternal ancestors from both the father and mother are invoked so that the ancestors accept the child as belonging to the whole extended family.

Mrs B.M (social worker) explained that not only was the infant introduced to the ancestors from the previous generation, but he or she was also introduced to as many ancestors as possible, and that each side of the family played a particular role – the maternal ancestors gave guidance whilst the baby belonged to the paternal family.

*Mrs B.M.: Both families ja, because in my cultural belief, we believe we have a very strong link with your maternal people so they form this guiding whatever. You belong to your paternal but you have a strong guiding whatever....from your maternal side.....In fact, you go as far as whatever*

*generation that you can remember....if I'm introducing my son. I'm calling all the Ma-'s, all the Mg-'s, all the Mh-'s, all the Du-'s, you know all the generation that I remember, that I think are still in relation to my son or my, my daughter. So when you introduce the child, you don't only introduce to your husband's side, you also introduce to all other ancestors that you think are the link, you know the family tree type of, yes.*

When talking to the ancestors, it is usually done at the *msamo*, a sacred area at the back of the main hut marked by a small raised wall (Armstrong, 2008) or in the cattle kraal, with the assistance of *mphepho* (*Helichrysum decorum*) which constitutes the ritual incense (van Wyl, van Oudtshoorn and Gericke, 1997; Hutchings, 1996). This too was found to be the practice by the participants in this study. Mrs H.M. a social worker, explains how her family combine the Western and the traditional functions for example when her two children were introduced to the ancestors, the traditional function occurred the day before the Western birthday party:

*Mrs H.M.: ....traditional ceremony happens on a Friday where we will burn mphepho and say Okay this is your child, protect him, give him luck whatever, whatever. And then the following day it will be whatever, the jumping castles, the cake.....On the previous day you do the serious stuff ...and then you also put the gall bladder on the child for that time, and then the following day they bath, they wear their, whatever, white dress for the function, and then it's a normal party. They would eat those Western things, maybe the salad, the rice, curry whatever. Afterwards there will the dead goat...used from the previous day on platter? You know those plank? Platter? .... and then some traditional bread, still bread, ja, and some traditional beer. Whatever. After the Western food.*

Most of the participants that were involved in this research would go to the family home in the rural area to participate in these rituals. However, Mrs H.M. the social worker continued her description of traditional functions saying that her husband as the eldest son, had built an *msamo* in their garden in a suburb of Durban, and he would hold rituals there with the participation of his uncle, the family elder.

Research participants also explained the importance of sacrificing animals as part of the ritual of communicating with the ancestors.

Mrs B.M.(social worker) explained this as follows:

*but with us the Zulu's mostly, whenever you're doing anything that is related to ancestors you use the goat. When you slaughter the cow, the cow is just to feed the people..... What you take from that [cow] skin as a symbol of your, your ritual is, it's like a bangle you know, that you put around your wrist.....Yes, so if it's the baby's ceremony then it should be the baby who, who wears the bangle. ....Yes, unless if you are just, the family is just doing a, a ritual just to say like a thanksgiving ritual, so the man of the house can have the bangle.....Because he's just, he's a representative for all of you, ja, but if it's a specific, for, for a specific person, that person needs to wear that bangle for certain period of time so that all the ancestors can visit the person and all of that.*

This ritual allows the child to be introduced to the extended family, the community as well as the ancestors, and the goat skin “Zulu bangle” identifies the child as having completed this ritual, and therefore he/she belongs to the family.

One of the social workers (Mrs N.M.) working in a rural community described using this knowledge when dealing with a suicidal teenager who had felt unaccepted as she had only recently been informed that she was not her parents’ biological child. However her foster mother explained that she had performed the *imbeleko* ritual when she was a baby, so the family’s ancestors had accepted her as belonging to that family, proof of which was that her “Zulu bangle” only came off when it dried and fell off her wrist. The social worker was thus able to use this to challenge her thinking during the counselling process. The implications for social work practice in this regard are obvious in that the worker understood the details of that particular ritual, and was also aware of the underlying meaning of the ritual. One can also see how this may be overlooked by a practitioner who does not have knowledge of either the process or the purpose of that ritual, and it highlights the need for specific guidelines for marriage counselling for Zulu couples.

➤ **Umhlonyane** - menstruation

Many of the participants did not mention or describe a ritual used for a girl's first menstruation, even when asked about it. This may be due to them not experiencing it, or due to discussions of sexuality being generally avoided. Even when it was mentioned, the language used was circumstantial, and metaphors were often used (constructionism is significant in this identification). This is apparent to a certain extent in the following example of a description by a social worker of the ritual that celebrates a girl's first menstruation when she reaches puberty:

Mrs B.M.: *You are a full girl now because all what is happening with other girls is happening to you..., You stay in your room for the whole week with girls who are also celebrating with you....and as part of that you are now being told, now, because you are now a full girl or a full woman or whatever, so you must know these things which are sexually related. Your mother, your aunts, your neighbour, whoever comes, ...I mean the main message is stay away from boys, you know, but they start to educate you about your body and you know, the parts of your body..... some of the girls they become very traumatised with menstruation itself. You know, you feel that maybe I've done something wrong and they said no, this is a normal, ... then on your last day when you are going out of the room... the father will tell the ancestors what is happening, what we are celebrating and all of that, they slaughter the goat, then you go to the river to wash. It's like you also washing all the impurities of being a young girl, because now you are entering this stage of being a grown girl. Ja....And then it's the dance, the food and all of that you know, the celebration now. But we always celebrate with the dancing, the Zulu dancing and all of that, ja.*

Several aspects of this quote relate to the importance attached to belonging. First of all, Mrs B.M. referred to spending the week with other young girls. Reaching puberty was thus celebrated with one's peers. Secondly the adult women from the community were also involved in visiting the girl and sharing information. Thirdly, the girl's father informs the family's ancestors what is happening. All these aspects, together with the celebratory nature of the function, with food and with dance, all help to engender a sense of belonging.

However, some respondents did not experience an *umhlonyane* ceremony, and so they were not given any information about menstruation or sex. Mrs N.M. (social worker) describes how she could not discuss these matters with her mother, and so when she had her first period, the family helper assisted her – her mother was only informed a few months later. When she asked her mother questions about puberty and menstruation her mother avoided answering and she was discouraged from asking such questions as indicated below.

Mrs N.M.: *Their attitude was “ ‘Why you asking that? It's not for you, it's for adult people’, you know those kind of answers of response to say, stop talking about that.”*

Thus in her personal experience there was no ritual, no involvement of her family, or of the women of the community, and therefore there was no reinforcement in the sense of belonging to the group, and correspondingly no information on puberty or sex, with possible negative long term effects on marriage.

Obviously, this lack of education about sex, and the corresponding negative attitudes that sex is hidden and dirty can affect a marriage negatively. This is apparent in the language used to refer to menstruation and sex education as discussed above, and is significant from a constructionist point of view as it illustrates that sex may only be discussed by girls and women with certain people, usually designated female elders, at certain times, otherwise as seen above, and as Hunter (2005) mentions, such questions are seen as highly impertinent and disrespectful. However information obtained during the *umhlonyane* process about the body and about sex, even including techniques for enjoying a physical relationship without risking penetration and pregnancy, such as “thigh sex” or *ukusoma*, can result in a more open, informed attitude towards sexuality. Unfortunately as is evident in this study, not all women had this opportunity for sex education, and as Hunter (2005) pointed out many urban youth had not even heard of *ukusoma*.

➤ ***Umemulo*** – coming of age

The celebration which is called *umemulo* is a coming of age ceremony (Magwaza, 2008; Zondi, 2012). The girl child is trained to be obedient from early childhood as mentioned below, to show respect, and to learn how to do certain chores in order to learn to be a good wife, and in exchange for doing this and not falling pregnant, her family organise a ritual and celebration to express their gratitude. According to Magwaza (2008) this can occur either in place of the menstruation ritual mentioned above, or more usually nowadays, when the girl is of marriageable age. Many participants likened it to a 21st celebration that occurs in Western societies, and mentioned the Western symbol for a coming of age i.e. giving a “key” to the family home to enable independence as is evident in the examples below, although according to the research participants, this gift of a key does not actually happen in the *umemulo* ritual. This illustrates how the meaning of social rituals can transfer from the dominant culture to the marginal culture as occurs in acculturation. During this ritual, to which the community are all invited, the ancestors are invoked and informed what is happening, there may be a period of seclusion with age-mates, and the family spear is given to the girl by her father, and then there is a lot of singing and dancing, during which the girl kneels in front of various community members who are then expected to give her cash, either pinning the paper money to her dress or her headdress, or putting it in an open umbrella. This ritual permits and informs the community that now the girl is of an age and of good character to get married (Magwaza, 2008; Zondi 2012). However, it is more than a fertility ritual, as according to Magwaza (2008: 482) she learns from her peers and elders “the obligations of deference expected of a married woman.” Therefore the ancestors are thanked, the parents are thanked and the girl is thanked. Mrs A.M. (family elder) describes *umemulo* as the girl’s parents giving their daughter permission to find a boyfriend as she has learnt the skills necessary to be a good wife:

Mrs A.M. :.....*twenty-one actually in, in English but with us, umemulo, they give you that key to adulthood to get married whether it's a boy or a girl, they give you umemulo so that you can now get married..... If you get married before then they don't stop you but they, they sort of, they're not happy. They will say to you, you are still too young to get married, you can't think well, you aren't able to cook for your husband. You know they say a lot of things but at twenty-one when your family or your father gives you umemulo then you are*

*ready..... Because you can think for yourself, you are able to cook, you have seen the world at twenty-one.*

Mrs T.V. (family elder) also stresses the function of the *umemulo* ritual as giving permission for the girl to date:

*Mrs T.V.: In our culture, that umemulo is meant for us to say thank you to the girl and then she can now start looking around whom does she want to fall in love with. The thing that I like about that culture is that if it's done correctly, then after the umemulo all the boys around knows that this girl has been declared a woman.*

Mrs J.M. (family elder) suggests that the *umemulo* ritual is returning to prominence, and she indicates that in her opinion the meaning of this ritual is to thank the girl for remaining a virgin.

*Mrs J.M. : you know when I grew up, it, people never used to do it [umemulo] so often, nowadays every girl once she is twenty-one there's a big function, there's a big traditional function....It's increased now, it's increased now, I don't know, people are more aware because for, they do it more frequently now. Yes less then, I don't remember when I grew up going to umemulo but now every weekend there's umemulo.....It's encouraging, it's mostly encouraging if you've the young daughters, to take care of themselves, because we wouldn't do umemulo for a child who has got a child too, so it's encouraging the young kids to, to take care of, to preserve their virginity so that they can have this big function, because it's an appreciation, it's showing appreciation, the parents are showing appreciation to this child that now you have grown up, you are now twenty-one years without a child so now we are giving you the keys, now you are an adult.*

It seems that *umemulo* is mainly done for girls that have not had a child and so are assumed to be virgins. Many of my research participants commented that this ceremony was to show appreciation to the child for being “well behaved”. Although



some mentioned checking their daughter's virginity or organising for it to be checked on a regular basis throughout their adolescence (such as Mr B.M. and Mrs E.M.; and one of the FAMSA Pietermaritzburg social workers, none of this study's participants mentioned that a public check for virginity (*ukuhlolwa kwezintombi*) occurred as part of the *umemulo* ceremony as described by Marcus (2008).

Although some respondents said that the *umemulo* ceremony could be done for boys, none of the men in this study had experienced this, and it seemed to be a rare occurrence. Only one man, Mr B.M. (the husband in a couple) spoke of a specific coming of age ceremony for boys where his *induna* organised for him and other young men to go to the mountains, and to talk, dance, do stick fighting and wrestling with bulls. This *Ukweshwama* ceremony was similar to the one described by Pete and Crocker (2012: 280) "The controversy surrounding ritual bull-killing in KwaZulu-Natal illustrates, perhaps, one of the many fault lines which fracture contemporary South African society – a clash between past and present; between pre-modern and modern; between African and Western; between Black and White; and, of course, between Animal Rights and Cultural Rights." It might be this controversy that resulted in only one person speaking about this practice, or it might be that it no longer happens to the same extent, particularly as cattle are expensive.

Hunter (2005) examines the history of the issue of multiple sexual partners in the Zulu culture historically. He describes that in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Zulu men and to a certain extent unmarried Zulu women were allowed multiple sexual partners. These men with multiple partners were looked up to and given the status of *isoka*, a man popular with women, a Don Juan, a Casanova. However, in spite of this, the main aim of the Zulu man at the turn of the century was to accumulate cattle, build a homestead (*umuzi*), get married to several wives and have children in order to become a respected *umunmzana* (household head) – the purpose of marriage was to build and grow the homestead through childbirth, and fidelity was not stressed. However, in the 1940's and 1950's as Christianity grew, women were discouraged from having multiple partners, and any woman that did so was viewed as an *isifebe*, a loose woman. Both men and to a lesser extent women started to earn wages, and agriculture started to wane. As a result, instead of relying on the family cattle to pay *ilobolo*, the financially secure migrant workers were able to save for and pay their own *ilobolo*. They also

were able to demand fidelity and chasteness from their wives. According to Hunter (2005) as the 20<sup>th</sup> century continued in the era of apartheid through 1994 to the present, it became more difficult for men to find work, long distance relationships were difficult to maintain for the migrant workers, and more women were being educated, entered the labour market and became independent of men. Unemployment and casual labour has grown in recent years.

Thus it has been more difficult for men to be able to be providers and to become an *umunmzana*, and although men still often have multiple partners, HIV/AIDS is slowing this (Hunter, 2005). However as described in the participants' quotes above, it is apparent that one of the recent recurring discourses in traditional Zulu culture is the emphasis on the need for virginity in girls and young women prior to marriage in order to ensure that any children that are born belong to the blood line of the husband's family. As seen in this study, the opportunity for sex education is built into the system of the *umhlonyane* and *umemulo* rituals, mainly for women, with a strong stress on virginity. This concern and anxiety about women's sexual behaviour towards men and the need for chasteness and the stress on virginity in order to ensure that any children belong to the man's family, results in another belief, which Mrs A.M., a family elder explains:

Mrs A.M.: *When you reach puberty is that in Zulu there are some types of foods which they tell you not to eat because they say you are going to be running after men....like eggs, cheese, pork and you know the pig, the pig, the pig will scream. So they think you are going to be like a pig if you eat pork. And this sour milk. So when you get married and they give you this sour milk, the cow, and tell you that you can eat, actually eat sour milk is because they know that you haven't been eating it at home since you reached puberty...you were eating it [sour milk] while you were still a child but when you reached puberty you stopped. Can't eat eggs, can't eat you know, all those things because they say, it's a belief that they make you run after men ...which is actually not true.*

The role of censure in a society is to protect the vulnerable and to punish those that do not comply in order to maintain the status quo. Thus in the example above, there is the

constant reminder to adolescent girls that it is improper and forbidden to run after men and become an *isifebe* or “loose woman”. However in the towns where it is possible to buy eggs, pork, and sour milk “*imaas*” from shops anonymously, rebellious young girls may get a sense of forbidden pleasure in breaking these strict rules.

As Marcus (2008:537) indicates “there were common practices that aimed to manage and monitor sexual socialisation, so as to reduce the possibility of premarital pregnancy and ensure the ritual reconstitution of family and community through marriage. At the same time, norms of sexual regulation reinforced a gendered hierarchy of power and authority”. In this study the young women were constantly warned against the dangers of premarital sex, and the need to remain a virgin. In contrast, according to the participants of this study, there seems to be little formal opportunity for men to have sex education, particularly if the *ukweshwama* ceremony does not occur. On one hand, as mentioned above, there was status given to men to be *isoka*, yet there are reparations, penalties, fines or “damages” for the male to pay if there is a child before marriage called *inhlawulo*. If the man pays this fine, it allows him to claim paternity (Posel, Rudwick and Casale, 2011). Some men in this study described paying *inhlawulo* as part of their *ilobolo*. By paying this, the child belongs to the man’s family and he is expected to contribute financially.

➤ ***Ilobolo*** – bride price

Marriage is viewed as an important and necessary milestone in both a man and a woman’s life in order to grow the family and to give a sense of belonging. As Mrs N.M. (a social worker) mentions because marriage is seen as the life goal, particularly of a girl-child, education is often neglected. The girl is brought up, and from a young age, is trained to be a wife, this is depicted in the quote below:.

Mrs N.M.: *...it’s been very common with us, that when you grow up you don’t get, you don’t even get education for that matter because there is a belief that, “but anyway, you are still going to go and get married” What’s the point? Why should you be educated? Why should you waste our money, educating the person who’s going to go and get married, and is not going to be ours anymore? So then the girl child is not taken to school, such that the*

*girl child is now brought up to be a wife to somebody. That's the thing, because it's not going to go to school, definitely is not going to get employed, so what's going to happen? Get married, bring back [the cattle through ilobolo] and be a wife to somebody, and then when a, when a person is now married, so she's going to do all what is expected of her.*

Mrs V. a family elder, described her long battle as a girl child to get educated. Her father lived in Johannesburg and her mother lived in a rural area, but her father did not contribute financially to her education. As a result she did not go to school, but as the only child she had to look after the family's animals. So she would go with the other boys in the village to herd the cattle, she would stick fight, and even eat the cow's liver as the boys did. However because she wanted education, she started doing chores and fetch groceries for people in the village and she would collect all the 10 cents that she was given until she was able to buy a slate. Then she bought a skirt and was given a second hand shirt. She then removed her traditional clothes and she told her mother that she had everything she needed for school. Thus she was 15 years old when she started school. She fell pregnant soon afterwards, but although her boyfriend paid the reparation fine *inhlawulo*, he did not support her financially. Her father then forbade her to go back to school, in spite of the fact that he had not contributed financially to her education. A few years later when she married her husband she asked his permission, and he allowed her to finish school through night school, so she was in her 40's when she eventually matriculated. She stressed that she was extremely grateful that once her children were born, her husband had allowed her to return to school as an adult and get educated.

The fact that a woman's self motivation was not sufficient to ensure education, but there was an overriding need for permission to be sought from her father and then from her husband before education could be pursued, is indicative of the hierarchical structure of traditional Zulu culture: in this case gender played a role. As can be seen from this, the purpose of the woman's life was to become a wife and a mother, and education was expected to play a minor role in her life. As a result it was difficult for women to financially support themselves, as they were dependant on the men.

Belonging is stressed during the process of *ilobolo*. Through its exchange of gifts over a period of time, as well as the introduction of the groom to the bride's family and to the bride's ancestors, and the bride to the groom's family and his ancestors as described in detail below, *ilobolo* spiritually, socially and emotionally merges the two families into one large unit. When the bride and her family come to the groom's home for the traditional wedding (*umshado*), her own individual background as well as that of her maternal and her paternal family, living and dead, is announced so that her new family and community know her history and where she belongs. One of the practices of respect (*ukuhlonipa*) to the bride as mentioned below is to call her by her maiden name, the name of the family to which she previously belonged. Thus her own family background is acknowledged by her in-laws in their home. This is significant because it is a practical example of the two families belonging together and it shows respect for the bride's family of origin. As one of the FAMS A Pietermaritzburg social workers explained one is not just talking to the individual person, nor to the part of the woman that is married, one is talking to the whole person which includes her own living relatives as well as all her maternal and paternal ancestors. This is another example of the communality in the Zulu world view.

The process of *ilobolo* as described by the participants of this study is as follows:

The first step is that the groom informs the bride's family that he wants to open negotiations for *ilobolo*, and comes with his negotiators to the bride's home. The future groom's family's negotiators ask for entry into the future bride's homestead in order to discuss *ilobolo*, or bride-price. Even at this early stage before the groom's negotiators have even entered the homestead, the bride's father may test the waters by using the metaphor of asking what the groom's negotiators will give to persuade the boy down from the tree to inform the father that he has visitors. The groom does not enter the homestead, only his family negotiators do so. At the beginning of the negotiations all the daughters of the house enter the room, and the negotiators are asked to identify the potential bride. Once she has been identified, she leaves the room. Thus neither bride nor groom is present at the negotiations. The price of the *ilobolo* is discussed by each family's negotiators in terms of how many cows, the cost of each, and how this will be paid – in cash and/or with cows. Generally in KwaZulu Natal the number of cows as designated by Shepstone in 1869 is 10 plus one for the

bride's mother if the bride does not have a child (Hunter 2005), and this was confirmed by most participants in this study.

Therefore if the girl is viewed as a virgin her family can increase the amount of the *ilobolo*, otherwise as mentioned above, if the groom is the father of the bride's child, he may pay his *inhlawulo* as part of his *ilobolo*. When the bride's family accepts the final price, the groom's family bring gifts in a ceremony called *umembeso* to thank them. During this ritual the groom is introduced in a ceremony to the bride's ancestors, so that these ancestors know what is happening, and will take care of him and his new family. The bride's family then later visit the groom's family bringing groceries as gifts in order to set the date of the wedding, and this ceremony is called *umbondo*. Then at a later stage *umshado* or the traditional wedding occurs during which the bride's family present gifts to the groom's family of blankets, mats and any other requests, which is called *umabo*; and the bride is introduced to the groom's ancestors. As is evident in this description of the process, there is reciprocity in gift giving, and as mentioned above, both bride and groom are introduced to each other's ancestors, so this is now a blending of two families. As Mrs B.M. (social worker) explains:

*All the processes, if you look at them deeply, you are both introduced into, in both ways, because I cannot just be taken to his, if he doesn't, if my ancestors they don't accept him and don't know him, so he needs to be acknowledged within my ancestors and, as well as I need to be acknowledged within his ancestors.*

However, *ilobolo* is often expensive, so sometimes the bride's family will agree that they can continue with *umshado*, the traditional wedding, even though there is *ilobolo* outstanding. This was the experience of Mr M.N. However, as he (the husband in a couple) warns .....

*for us, if you haven't finished the ilobolo, you [the groom] have to prepare for the, for the wedding yourself because you haven't finished, so they [the bride's family] can't, they can't contribute. [If] You[the groom].... pay full lobola and then you meet halfway when it comes to the wedding preparations.*

One of the consequences is that when the process runs smoothly, this may set the tone of future in-law relationships.

Mr M.N. explains further: *But ja, as I say, it[his wife's family] was a very lovely family because we did everything together. I was supposed to cater for the whole wedding myself but no, they, they met us halfway. Even still as I'm saying I haven't even finished [paying] today,.. this thing of lobola.... We have to visit my mother-in-law, we make sure that every month. Even my parents, we didn't give them anything but we make sure that my mother-in-law must, must get something, must get, must have grocery, must have money. We make sure because ...I do that because how she welcomed me.... She's treating me ... she's treating me like she's treating her son ja. I feel ja, part of the family ja. So to me, she's like my mother. Even though the ilobolo is not finished but we, we're so united.*

In this particular case, the *ilobolo* negotiations had been sensitively handled with due understanding of the needs of the prospective on-in-law. In return, the son-in-law has undertaken to visit his in-laws regularly, and to assist them financially regularly.

Mrs H.M. a social worker also described how *ilobolo* builds the relationship between both families, and may dictate future relationships:

Mrs H.M.: *[ilobolo] I understand it, it's to create a relationship between my in laws and us. That is why I was able to tell my mother that they shouldn't say too much money because it will chase them [the groom and his negotiators] away, and then to cause problems for me in the future. Maybe when I want to visit my house... they will say, this is our wife, we paid a lot of money, she mustn't go home, she belong here..... I got married when I was young. So I still felt that I had responsibilities with my siblings. ....so I wanted to be able to give them money or give them some assistance. So if my husband pays a lot of money, I wasn't going to be able to do that.... because [he could say]... but I paid a lot of money to your house. How come they don't take from that money? .... So I didn't want that drama... Whenever I want to help my mother I*

*will do that. Whenever I want my siblings to come over to my house, they'll be able to do that. It is happening now. We have no drama, because there's that understanding, there's that relationship.*

Fortunately she was able to discuss this with her mother and her mother's brother in advance, so they all were aware of her concerns about this matter, and duly took these into consideration when negotiating *ilobolo*, resulting in a positive outcome.

Both the above examples show how flexibility with the *ilobolo* results in the growth of belonging and also builds respect and *ubuntu* in terms of helping each other.

All the participants of this study used the process of *ilobolo*. The result of this for the participants in this study was that they felt confident in their roles within the husband's family. As Mr G.X. and Mrs A.X. indicate

*Mrs A.X.: And the respect that you get as a woman when you have been paid lobola for....cause right now I'm in a position where I need to make decisions and whatever, so I'm confident in making those decisions as a female member.*

*Mr G.X. The right person to make the decision.*

*Mrs A.X. I'm the right person to make the decision because if they haven't paid lobola for you and you always feel inferior cause you always, you do not belong. You do not belong....It gives you that right, yes, you belong, you know this, they did everything right in order for you to come and be a member of that family, you are a full member of that family.*

Mrs H.M. a social worker continued her explanation that for her it was not about money, but it was about the Zulu custom:

*Mrs H.M: I also did not want my husband to feel like he bought me. Because I'm not some object that he can buy, you see? It was just to fulfil that customary side. It was not about money...it was not about paying, it was not about buying anybody. It was about doing the right thing at that time. Yes. So I didn't care how much they said he should pay as long as it was done in a reasonable way. Yes. That was my understanding.*



Mrs T.M. concurred with appreciating the traditional aspect of *ilobolo*, but also stressed that it also showed her husband appreciated her as indicated below:

Mrs T.M.: *It's been there, it's something that has been practised for a long time, now. Maybe I, I should say, your husband should value his wife..... Ja, because if, if you don't pay lobola, it's like, you don't value your wife, you don't respect her as a wife, ja.*

When *umshado*, the traditional wedding occurs, the bride takes all her clothes and other belongings in a *kist*, a wooden box, to the groom's home. This wooden box had significance for several of the female respondents in that it was likened to a coffin, so the bride now belongs to the groom's family, and the only time she would leave it, is at her funeral in her coffin. As a result, marriage is final, a wife cannot return to her family of origin as she now belongs to her husband's family, and divorce is not an option. Divorce does not exist for traditional Zulu couples.

As Mrs N.M. (wife in a couple) says : *Then, you know what does that mean, the kist, they say it must be, have a kist when you're coming from home to the, ... to the groom's, because, that means, this box means that, no more back, you will be buried here.*

MR C.M: *A kist is important, must have the kist.*

MRS N.M.: *No more, I won't be buried at home, now I'll be [buried] here.*

This is confirmed by the X couple, who spoke simultaneously, and who describe that as a result, in the past, divorce was not countenanced in the Zulu culture.

Mrs A.X. (couple): *You go and get married with your coffin. It means that in that home where you are going, you will only be leaving in a coffin.....So you will die there.....So you leave with your coffin from your home.*

Mr G.X.: *This thing of divorce, it means nothing. It's just a legal thing just to, because now people have got, you know, assets?....It's just to for fair distribution of assets. If you are married ...*

Mrs A.X.: *It's a done deal.*

Mr G.X.: ... *it's a one way process...*

Mrs A.X. *It's a one way process. Because of the, what you call, the rituals that involved.*

Mr G.X.: *It cannot get undone*

Mrs A.X.: *The difference is, you can stay apart and everything, but if you are a woman, you will always belong to that, where you, to that family ...*

Mr G.X. : ... *where you got married, irrespective. That is why sometime, in those days not that divorce wasn't there. But what used to happen... I can move on with my life, get another wife but she [the first wife] will still be my responsibility, I still have to take care of everything. Like shelter, make sure that she[has food], the kids go to school. All the responsibility that I would have had even if I was, what you call it, staying with her formally.*

Mrs A.X: *Ja, but when there are functions at his parents' home or whatever I have a right to go.*

Mr G.X.: *You still a married woman.*

Mr M.M. (the husband in a couple) confirmed that in the Zulu culture divorce is not accepted as a termination of the spousal bond:

Mr M.M.: *If you are married and then you go for the divorce. You can divorce in court and everything but in Zulu custom you are not divorced. Even my wife [s]he can go and marry somewhere. When I'm die you'll come back again to me, to stay in my house and wear the dark clothes for the year... you'll [the ex-wife] come back from there and you'll stay here for the year....They are united ...We are together, we are together forever.*

Mrs N.M. (a social worker) also explained the symbolism of the *kist* and used the symbols of Christianity to show that unlike Jesus, it is impossible for a wife to return to her previous life with her family of origin.:

Mrs N.M. *With the family that you're leaving and now you're going in your coffin, in your kist, with your kist to join the new family... so now, so that you should, they even say when you leave your family you don't have to look back. You just have to go straight to where you're going to so that you don't come*

*back. That is why in our culture we say divorce is not recognized, because when you die it's believed you don't resurrect like Jesus. You don't get to life again, so you don't come back to your family again, so when a person is going to join the [husband's] family she's made to understand that it's where you belong.*

Mrs N.M. the above mentioned social worker continues to explain how the wife belongs to her husband's family, and how this continues even after her death.

*Mrs N.M.: Because with us, even if a person gets divorced, but the in-laws can still keep the makoti. They can, even if they are divorced. The makoti can still continue to stay with the in-laws, even though they are divorced. It's normal.... They do keep them, and it's okay, its normal because this marriage belongs to this family.*

*Mrs N.M. continues her explanation later in the interview: Even if they do divorce... (but divorce is not recognized), say like you run back to your family, you stay with your family and then you don't stay with your in-laws any more, but if you die, they'll[your own family] take you nicely back to your in-laws, because they'll say "This is where you belong. You don't belong here any more." Back. Your body.*

Mrs T.M. a family elder, describes how separation is preferable to divorce for the sake of the children.

*Mrs T.M.: You don't divorce your woman because the children will be alienated from the main household but you get a unit outside which is ..not far from the main homestead, then the husband is able to visit this wife that's out. Even if they don't share you know, other things. Usually when they parted you know, there's no sexual sharing but then he comes there as the father of the children and if he does sleep, there is his own side where he can sleep and the*

*woman sleeps in her side and it's that, but they've parted from conjugal rights. But it's done with respect so that the children do not get disturbed.*

From a social constructionist perspective the intensity of the language used in these examples above illustrates the finality of the process of marriage in that it implies the death of the previous life with the family of origin, and moving forward to a married life, from which there is no return. Marriage is not only between two consenting adults as per western custom. The wife belongs to the husband and his family, even after either of them die. In my opinion these strong cultural imperatives against divorce amplified the need for effective, relevant marriage counselling for Zulu couples.

The initiation of *ilobolo* negotiations is supposed to provide a vetting role to ensure the stability of a marriage as mentioned above, and the gradual interchange of gifts and rituals enables the two families to merge, and allows the daughter-in-law in particular to feel that she belongs to her husband's family, whilst at the same time decreasing the ties to her own family. If in modern times this doesn't always happen effectively it may be important to supplement the traditional practices with formal pre-marital preparation, which would need to be culturally sensitive.

Mrs M.N. (a family elder) describes how the daughter-in-law is acknowledged in the husband's family after marriage. At her *umemulo* ceremony at her family of origin's home she is no longer allowed to eat sour milk, but now at her wedding, living with her in-laws where she now belongs, she is allowed to have sour milk, and is given her own cow to do so.

*Mrs M.N.: On his side they will put you know bile, inyongo on your right hand and your right foot to welcome you to this home. When they're finished doing that they will give you a wooden spoon to say you will eat sour milk here and they give you a cow and they point a cow in kraal to say this is your cow for sour milk, amasi....It's the start of your, your livestock here in this family. You can have your own kraal, you can do whatever you like with that cow. You can sell it if you want to, but it's not wise. Because they are, they're, they've given [the cow to] you to start your own life....And then your husband will build a*

*house if he wants to stay amongst the family. But you are not going to stay in your mother's house, the mother-in-law's house. He builds you your house or he builds a house outside somewhere, you know, he goes to the Chief to ask for a land and then he builds the house there, which he calls 'my father's house' With us it's his father's house. So I have a son here. If he goes to build a house or buys a house outside there in Ngwelezane outside this home, it's his father's house....Umuzi kababa. [Legally] it's in his own name, but traditionally it's his father's.*

Clearly *ilobolo* played a significant role in traditional societies and it is an aspect of Zulu culture which the participants in this study all valued highly. However, writers such as Hunter (2008), Marcus (2008), Posel, Rudwick and Casale (2011) indicate there are fewer marriages today in black communities which they see as the result of paying *ilobolo* being so expensive as the cost of the cattle has increased, and the type and the cost of the gifts has also changed. Several participants agreed with this and stressed that this was a recent problem. Contrary to Dlamini's (1985) view that *ilobolo* was not compensation to the bride's parents, Mr M.N. felt that the bride's parents expect financial reimbursement for raising their daughter.

Mr M.N. (husband in a couple): *I think ja, it's a money thing because some parents they still want to, it's like if they raised the kids, they want some profit back, so to them it's, it's a profit thing. They want to benefit out of you. So if you've got girls so he, he knows that he's going to be rich one day.*

According to some of the participants, in the past many people had cattle of their own which they could use to pay *ilobolo* and if they did not have cattle themselves, they were able to use cattle belonging to other family members. As Mr S.S. (the husband in a couple) mentions the *makoti* (daughter-in-law) is not just the husband's *makoti* but she is the *makoti* for the whole family.

Mr S.S.: *It's a family thing. Because it's not only my makoti, it's our makoti, because she'll be helping, doing her duties within the yard, for everyone and stuff. Yes, like, let's say, for cooking, she will be cooking for all of the family, not only for me, so we do everything[ilobolo] together.*

However, when this possibility was discussed with the FAMSA Durban social workers, they indicated that they were not in favour of the groom's whole family contributing to *ilobolo* as in their experience both personally and professionally it would allow the *makoti* to be beholden to her in-laws which could result in trouble in the marriage. This "ownership" of the daughter-in-law suggests that there is an imbalance of power which results in the *makoti* having no say in the home, and in others controlling her.

Other ways of overcoming this expense was that the negotiators from both sides would walk through the groom's family's cattle *kraal*, and the groom's negotiators would promise the future calves from particular cows to pay the *ilobolo*. Another method that the participant mentioned was to use rocks to symbolize future cattle. However recently *ilobolo* has become more individualised due to the influences of modernization and westernized values. Thus the groom is expected to pay the *ilobolo* on his own and preferably to finish paying it before they get married (Hunter, 2005). Some of the participants such as Mr M.N. and Mrs D.N., and mentioned that in their opinion greed and commercialisation had resulted in very high *ilobolo* prices as not only were the cattle highly expensive but also the exchange of gifts would include designer names. Mrs T.M. a social worker mentioned that the increase in the cost of the gifts is the result of greed, particularly if the woman's relatives know that the husband earns well.

Mrs T.M.: *I think it's all about greedy, you know, other families are greedy, especially if they know that your boyfriend is earning a lot of money or is doing a good job, things like that, then they become greedy.*

Mr G.X. and Mrs A.X. discussed how in the past, the exchange of gifts was financially manageable, but now the demand to receive expensive gifts had increased expenses.

Mrs A.X.: *but also the gifts now, in those days it was just amapinif, [pinafore] I don't know if you know the meaning of amapinif? And that is cost like forty rand and you know those blankets that are ....Those are like less than hundred*

*rands. But now people will be asking for microwaves. They will be asking for Ipad, for laptop, for you know all these expensive things? And then it's very difficult for you. You are just working and you have to pay all these things and*

*...*

*Mr G.X.... this is Durban thing. You know ...*

*Mrs A.X: Inland is still fine.*

*Mr G.X..... people are becoming more materialistic*

As Mr M.N. indicates below the families are not looking at the long term life of the couple when setting such high prices but are only looking at their own wants. So greed rather than future security of the marriage is at play here, and preventing this may be difficult. The research participants stress this is the reason to have good negotiators. If this does not work and the *ilobolo* process is stalled as a result, there may be a need for official mediation. Mr M.N. suggests that the difference lies in the fact that the Christians see that *ilobolo* and marriage is part of a longer life journey. He explains as follows:

Mr M.N. (the husband in a couple): *And the ilobolo it becomes light in these Christian families other than these deep, the traditional people because now these deep, traditional people, they're still not clear with other things that there's a, a journey after this, all these lobola things for these two people but at least the Christians now, they've got this thing taken out in their eyes so they, they look at things with a different eye so it becomes a little bit easier.*

Mrs V. (family elder) through the interpreter, also suggested that it is cheaper to be a Christian than to use traditional cultural methods. If all the generations of both families are Christians, this would work well, but conflicts could arise from this if the elder generation of one or both families have traditional beliefs whilst the others are Christian.

Mrs V : *She says some of the cultures[rituals] are very expensive .... so where do you get R10 000,00 if your pay its R2000,00; how do you do that? So it becomes a burden that you are not able to do the [cultural] things.... that's*

*how expensive it is. Whereas if you believe in God you could just pray about it, and God, you don't have to pay money to God... you don't pay a cent. You just have to believe and pray and things happen.*

Mrs L.M. a social worker suggests that the high cost of *ilobolo* creates an imbalance between the two families, and describes how if there are marital problems, the bride's family will not support her as they fear that if she returns to her family of origin, they will have to repay *ilobolo*.

*MRS L.M.: It's, it's very wrong. That way, and usually the in-laws, the girl's family, it's like they're not very much, they don't become very much assertive or protective of their daughter. They become, I would say vulnerable. They become weak to a certain extent. I think, my thinking, it's because they accepted the lobola payment and then now they, they cannot say much because that person was married.... it's not like you fully belong to your family, to your biological family. You more belong to your in-laws than to your biological family, such that even if you want to go and visit your family it's like you have to get a permission first.*

Thus this imbalance between the two families would result in a difference in power between them, which is very evident in the words used above, and this would reinforce the patriarchal structure of the Zulu family and community.

Mr C.M. (the husband in a couple) explained that because of the expense he started saving for *ilobolo* as soon as he started working:

*the years when we are starting working, you need to have some money you can ...Yes, put away for saving for them, because, before any church, before you tell your pastor that you want to go to [pay ilobolo]... maybe your pal, they talk...You know, that this man is strong, you know.*

*MRS N.M.: You must have more than 50 000 in bank account.*

*MR C.M.: You must have the money in your bank account.*

When I asked the young 4<sup>th</sup> year student social workers at FAMSA Durban in the group discussion of phase two of the study for their opinion on this, they felt it was



unrealistic to save money for *ilobolo* before marriage. They were paying off student loans, and as they were the first university graduates in their family, once they were employed, they were expected to contribute financially to their parents to assist the rest of their siblings. As a result they could not afford to save towards *ilobolo* in advance, and therefore this was an obstacle to getting married. The expense incurred over the payment of *ilobolo* as a result of greed needs addressing. Knowledge of the consequences of this greed needs to become part of life skills education for marriage in order to prevent it in the future.

Mrs A.X. and her husband Mr G.X. emphasised how the expense causes stress to both members of the couple, not only for the groom:

*Mrs A.X. And another thing that's parents don't realise is that even if they can ask for those expensive things because you are getting married, you[the bride] [also] want to get married. You will both end up buying those things, it's not like they only making the groom suffer only. Cause even yourself, even if you go and take a loan.....So just to make things difficult for the groom, they are just making their daughter to suffer as well.*

*Mr G.X. It's parents. The problem is parents. Even, that's why I'm saying, if you've got parents, proper parents that understand what needs to be done. You'll never.. get all these unnecessary expenses.*

In spite of the expense, *ilobolo* is seen as an intricate part of Zulu married life and as Posel, Rudwick and Casale (2011) indicate, Zulu couples are generally not resorting to only having a civil or church marriage instead, but are waiting to pay the *ilobolo* before they get married. Unfortunately because many potential grooms do not start the *ilobolo* payments prior to marriage, nor pay them off over a period of time, but try to only pay them once they have accumulated the whole *ilobolo*, the bride's family may not know of or acknowledge their relationship as seen earlier in this chapter. How this affects the relationship is complex as sexual relations between the couple may result in unplanned pregnancy, thereby making the *ilobolo* even more expensive.

However the expense of paying *ilobolo*, and in particular paying it as an individual in one lump sum makes it difficult for potential grooms. Nowadays in these difficult

financial times when there is high unemployment, and a high cost of living in a cash strapped economy, it may be easier for the young men to only pay the *inhlawulo* fine for having a child before marriage, as the child then belongs to his family, without paying *ilobolo* and getting married. However exploring this possibility was outside the scope of this study as the participants were already married.

Not paying the *ilobolo* seems to have consequences as explained by Mr G.X and Mrs A.X:

As Mrs A.X. explains: *There are black people who no longer practice the ilobolo thing because they are now...newborns [Christians],*

Mr G.X.: *The Bible says nothing about ilobolo.*

Mrs A.X. :*but also with them when time goes when they are married for some time and they find that they have got problems now, they go back to it and say maybe that was the reason why, that is the reason why maybe our marriage is falling apart or whatever. Then they go back and do those things. So I don't think it will ever[stop] ...*

In my opinion this is due to the purpose and strength of the process of *ilobolo* which is to merge two families so that the members belong. This process of belonging continues even after death where the spirit of the deceased is brought back home from the place where the death occurred, and the widow sits in mourning. The family then dictates what the widow should wear which usually includes black clothes to express her mourning (*ukuzila*), while the widower wears a black band on his upper arm. Mrs M.T. (a social worker) commented that because her husband had not finished paying *ilobolo* his family did not view her as belonging to the family, and therefore she was not allowed to sit in mourning when her mother-in-law died, only his sisters sat in mourning. This caused her great distress, hurt and anger as not only did she care deeply for her mother-in-law, but it also publically highlighted her separation from his family, and her lack of acceptance and belonging within his family was demonstrated to the community.

Two of the participants mentioned the practice of *Ubugena*, where the widow marries

the brother of the deceased in order to keep the widow and her children within the family. However as Mrs L.M. a social worker said after her husband died and she was offered this, she replied 'I loved your brother, not you'. She explained that this traditional practice was to protect the widow and to keep the children in the family as follows:

*Mrs L.M. :They do it cause they want to keep you in the family ...the children not to go to other families because if your husband has passed on, if you are still young there is a possibility that you will get married again. And if you get married again what will happen to these children? So I think, I'm not sure, but it's what I'm thinking that maybe they are trying to keep you into this family with their children and you are part of the family now. They paid lobola for you and you are part of their family and your children and everything belong to this family...And they don't want, initially I think also they did it for the wife not to go out and being stranded and ...nobody to support this women and his kids....Ja so I think the main purpose was that not for you to go out and not knowing who is going to suffer.... They will not chase you away because your husband has passed.*

Mr. M.M. (family elder) agrees that it protects the widow and suggests that this was necessary due to her being subservient to her husband.

*Mr M.M.: Because the Zulu women were, you know, taught to be subservient and they believed that you need a husband to live, you can't live without a husband especially if your husband passes away and you have got children and these other, your husband brothers, they are in a better position to look after your children; and remember you have got babies who are bearing this clan name, and you do not want to go and marry as well and make more babies with different surnames. It's like, you know, it gives you a bad name to have children with different surnames. So they believe that it was a good thing, even though they were not actually forced, but it was, they used to accept it. With eyes of today, you can see that it was definitely not moral, it was not right, but it was happening a lot and still happening now. So they used to be taken by their brothers in law. It still happening. And the women they also they see the benefit or advantage of doing that. They feel like they are still*

*having a family.*

When asked whether it could be enforced physically, all the participants denied this and commented that if so, this would only happen in the “deepest rural areas”. This practice thus appears to be less entrenched and accepted today.

Thus the sense of belonging is one of the recurrent themes that was mentioned by the participants of this study. As Afeke and Verster (2004:52) stress “for Africans, family membership is fundamentally important to the person’s understanding of who he or she is.” The family includes both the living people and the family’s ancestors, and this feeling of belonging to the family is therefore socially constructed, developed and grown in the rites of passage as described above, and it is entrenched in the spiritual rituals mentioned below.

### **5.3.2. Spirituality**

- **Ancestors**

I will now discuss the next theme, the second side of the triangle: spirituality – see diagram below.

**Diagram 4: Spirituality**



As can be seen from the above discussion, rituals can play a role throughout a person's life, particularly in that of a girl-child, to mark the rites of passage, and the ancestors or *amadlozi* are an integral part of this. "African religion is not distinct from African culture and is linked to life and its activities in totality" (Afeke & Verster, 2004:48). Only the good, caring, respect-worthy ancestors are called to be part of a ritual, and in return they will assist the family member/s with good luck, success and prosperity. However, if the ancestors are neglected or ignored they will send bad luck and failure to the family (Afeke & Verster, 2004). As Masanga (2006:941) stresses, unethical people are not invited to guide their descendants. "In other words, they have misled others and did not play a prominent role in shaping spiritual personality. They were not accountable to community while alive". This is consistent with the information shared by this study's participants. Mr M.N. and his wife Mrs D.N. describe this belief as indicated below and Mr M.N. talks about the significance of the ring of skin from the goat sacrifice, often called "the Zulu bangle":

Mrs D.N.: *It's also their belief that if they didn't do all these things[rituals] your marriage won't...[last]....*

Mr M.N.: *The bangle ja. Everyone, they insist that once the goat has been slaughtered, everyone must have that thing....It's like a, eish I don't know what you can call it. It brings all the luck and sends away all the evil spirit and ja.... So if you have it, you're safe. Your ancestors are here with you. Everywhere you go they are here, guarding you, watching you.*

The ancestors also expect their descendants to comply with the rituals that mark the rites of passage. For example Mrs H.M. a wife in a couple, (translated) indicated that having an *umemulo* was important to her because she was told that if it was not done, it was going to create problems with the ancestors. Mrs N.M. a social worker described that although her father had paid the full *ilobolo*, her parents had only had a white Western wedding, and they had not completed *umabo*, the traditional wedding. Her parents were concerned at this, and so they started planning to do the *umabo* when her mother became terminally ill, when Mrs M.N was already an adult. Her mother died prior to completing this ritual, and so a year later her father completed the *umabo* posthumously. As Mrs N.M. explains it was done so that her mother would be accepted by her father's ancestors:

Mrs N.M.: *...so there is that belief that if the traditional wedding is not done, the bride will not be accepted by the ancestors of the groom.... my father felt that no, we need to do the traditional wedding now...[he was worried] that she was loitering around not being accepted by the M. ancestors, so that ceremony was done after the mother had passed.*

Thus in order to have a good life the family members need to honour and respect the ancestors, so that when they pass on and become ancestors themselves, they will be respected, and called on to look after their own family. Failure to respect and act accordingly may give rise to fear and insecurity that they will be duly punished with bad luck in the present life, and that they will not be deemed honourable enough by

the community to be called on to take care of their own family descendants. This may result in rigid acceptance of past traditions which may cause marital conflict, or in ambivalence and conflict with their elders if they do not agree with and do not want to comply with the traditional expectations. Counselling would therefore need to take the couple and the family's beliefs about ancestors into consideration, and help them process these constructively.

- **Traditional religion and Christianity**

However, not all the study's participants were involved in the calling of and working with the ancestors as they did not believe in them as mentioned for example by Mrs A.M.:

*Mrs A.M.: That's tradition which some do not actually keep because they say they are Christians, they can't just be doing all those things, they just don't care.*

When discussing the role of ancestors in rituals, the participants also explained the role that spirituality had in their life. The couples spoke about their committed spiritual beliefs when discussing their belief or lack of belief in ancestors. All of them believed in God and belonged to a particular religion. This confirms Thabede's (2008) indication that one of the common themes of African life is the belief in God. Another interesting factor that became evident during the interviews is the level and variety of religious beliefs. A few belonged to traditional African churches, but others belonged to traditional Christian churches and were Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Lutherans or Methodists. Others belonged to charismatic Christian churches such as the Apostolic Faith Mission. One couple was a Jehovah's Witness, and another couple were Rastafarians.

Whether or not they were Christians, some included the ancestors in their religious practices, whilst others didn't. Masanga (2006:935) describes the need for African people to use a spokesperson to mediate between themselves and a senior person of higher rank within the hierarchy of the family and community, and how this process of using a spokesperson may feel comfortable to also use in their spiritual life.. "They

find it difficult to talk directly to a higher being without a spokesperson. When they share their problems they will always seek a mediator, because they feel that they are talking to someone who is not their equal. In other words, they will share their problems, happiness and sadness, or any other difficulty via a mediator. The concept of hierarchy and authority comes into play whenever they feel the person to be higher in position.” An example of this occurred when Mr G.X. described how his link to God is through his ancestors.

*Mr G.X.: My connection to [God] is through my ancestors. What happens after them, .... they are my connection to God and everything.... You know my protection or whatever, it's through ...my ancestors. Yes. You know you always deal with people that you know. Or that you ...that you've met. It's not that I can go talk [to] Allah or Jesus. I've never met him. My protection might be from him but my connection with Jesus is through my ancestors.*

However, several participants explained that they were Christians and therefore did not believe in the ancestors, for example Mr M.N. and Mrs D.N. In this study the Christians would attend their own church functions; and prayers and Bible study both in the home and in church were frequent. However some of them would also attend traditional functions. Because they wished to be respectful to their family, they would attend the function, but they would not participate in the specific ritual with the ancestors nor would they eat the goat's meat. However they would attend the celebrations afterwards and they would eat the beef. Manala (2008) describes how this dichotomy in beliefs can cause problems. So fear of not appeasing ancestors may be compounded by contradictory spiritual beliefs, particularly those based on Christianity. This was evident in this study, and for example Mr M.N. (the husband in a couple) explains the potential difficulty that can occur if there are different beliefs between different generations. He indicated that compromise may only be reached after a period of time, sometimes with a lot of intense conflict, and the conflict may even result in being banished from belonging to the family:

*Mr M.N. It creates problems, that thing, because the parents they always insisting in doing what they still believe is right but if you say no, that's what, that's what happens but you always fight until you reach a certain*



*understanding; then your father will understand that if I slaughter a goat here, Mandla is not going to put that the Zulu band thing. So it takes time but you must be prepared to fight. They can even send you away from home. They say 'Yoh! you are no longer a part of us if you don't do this', so there are so many things that they do with this cultural thing. It creates problems if you, if you look at this thing in a different eye whereas parents they, they still want it to be done. It takes time.*

Mrs N.M. a social worker describes the mix of traditional religion and Christianity in her family.

*Mrs N.M.: So my father like he would slaughter a cow, sometime to speak with the ancestors and asking them maybe to, to continue looking after us, yes, and doing things for us, but also we would believe a lot in religion. Yes, in church. We are Roman Catholics, but we also do the cultural things.*

Only two participants described the difference in beliefs as causing conflict in their marriage. Both were wives who had different beliefs to their husbands. One was part of a couple and the other one was a social worker. The way they dealt with this conflict was very different. One did not go with her husband to his new Christian charismatic church but did go with her mother-in-law to her church which she preferred, while the other went with her husband to his church as she felt that it was important to be a respectful wife.

As indicated in the previous section on belonging, spirituality is very much part of the African family way of life, whether or not there is a belief in honouring the ancestors. In my opinion the need to belong may cause conflict if there was a difference in the belief in the family's ancestors, as the elder generation may view this as challenging the ancestors which could result in bad luck for the whole family. Thus not believing in the ancestors is more than just a difference of opinion, but it goes to the heart of the Zulu family and their beliefs and values. It is therefore impossible to isolate belonging and spirituality as they are so intertwined, but they were not identical, and they each have great value and reinforce each other according to this study's respondents, and so they were seen as two equal sides of the triangle.

### 5.3.3. Respect – *Hlonipha*

In this section I will discuss the third side of the triangle illustrated above which looks at respect or *hlonipha*.

**Diagram 5: Respect – *Hlonipha***



When the participants of this study were asked what they wanted their grandchildren to know about being Zulu, what they were proud of in being Zulu or what they valued about being Zulu, they all replied that for them the issue of *hlonipha* was very important. *Hlonipha* is a practice of showing respect. Rudwick and Shange (2009:) define it as “a complex social and linguistic behavioural codex, that requires deferential conduct.” There are two categories in the way this is shown: showing respect verbally and showing respect through behaviour.

- **Verbal respect**

The first aspect of respect consists of what can and cannot be said. There were several examples of how to show respect through not being allowed to say certain things, for example not being allowed to use the father-in-law's name so there is a need to change the phrasing if his name would normally come up in conversation - if his name in Zulu was Blessing it could not be used in conversation and therefore you would need to use a different phrase accordingly. Another example, as mentioned earlier, is in order to show respect for the daughter-in-law, her maiden name is used instead of either her married name or her first name. This is described below:

Mrs A.X. (the wife of a couple) *...in our culture you don't lose your surname. Because when I'm at his [home], everybody in his family, they don't call me by my name. They call me by my [maiden]surname. I am, they call me Ma Ngcobo.... My maiden name is always known to everyone. That becomes my name.*

or she is described as mother of the children:

Mr M.N. (the husband of a couple): *The man traditionally, they don't have anything to show[respect for the women] except that you don't call your wife with a name. You just say, if you've got kids you rather refer, you say mother of somebody, let's say Mother of Dumisile...*

There are certain topics that cannot be spoken about directly, and therefore euphemisms or circumlocutions are used instead (Rosenblatt & Nkosi 2007). Sex is one topic that it is disrespectful to discuss. An example of this that occurred in this study is instead of a girl described as having menstruated or had her period, it will be described as a girl becoming a "full woman" as seen above. Language and languaging has a significant role to play as choice of words and /or direct or indirect reference to key words can clearly engender a volley of responses. The repercussions for practice are that the counsellor needs to be sensitive to expected rules of *hlonipa*, but also

needs to clarify which are used by the particular couple and their family, and whether these are causing conflict.

There are other techniques to avoid language that is viewed as disrespectful. Another way to avoid being disrespectful when discussing sex is to use a metaphor instead. Mrs A.B. (a family elder) explains that a girl's vagina (a word that she avoids and instead refers to "your body") is called "your father's kraal".

*Mrs A.B.: in Zulu they call imomozi, that is your body, they call it your father's kraal ...So nobody and nobody must ever see or get into your father's kraal. No one. Even your mother tells you that. Your mother can, if, if your mother is brave or bold enough... she tells you that 'remember this is your father's kraal, you are not going to be opening it up for boys and whoever ask except me.' That's why they call it inkomokama because it is only mama who must see here, no one else. The elders who accompany you for the virginity testing are your mamas, even if they are not your, your real mother. Your mother gives them permission to take you to the Chief's kraal so that when you go for marriage you are pure, you are sure [of] that[when] you are going to that man [husband].*

Mrs N.M. a social worker described how the lack of discussion about sex can result in the lack of discussion about contraception, which is one of several things that lead to pregnancy before marriage.

*Mrs N.M.: With the Zulu people, the parents, it's not very easy to talk about such things, ja, they do not tell us such things, we, we are scared of talking about such things with our kids, so the child will see it on the way, other people will tell the child, the friends, everyone who wants to tell the child, this is what you need to do, this is what you don't need to do....Ja, so even my parents did not tell me anything about.*

Rudwick and Shange (2009) indicate that unfortunately this inability to talk directly about sexual acts has had negative consequences in rape court cases. In such cases the female is expected to describe in detail what has occurred so that she can be cross-

examined by the defence lawyer, but as talking about sex is viewed as disrespectful and shameful, they will either refuse to do so, be euphemistic or will use metaphors rather than details.

This will also affect the marriage as talking explicitly about sex is not allowed, so if there are problems they cannot discuss the issue, and similarly it will impact any attempts at sex therapy. This is closely tied to the next category of respect which is behaviour that is viewed as respectful.

- **Respectful behaviour**

The second category of what can and cannot be done in order to show respect consists of both performing certain behaviours, as well as avoiding other behaviours. This study's participants mentioned the following in this regard: showing respectful behaviour (*hlonipha*) includes always greeting each other, speaking softly (what Leclerc-Madlala (2008) calls muted womanhood, although according to this study's participants men are also expected to speak quietly and calmly), men and woman sitting separately, the *makoti* or daughter-in-law not being in the same room as her father-in-law, kneeling to an elder, or a wife kneeling to her husband when giving something. Other examples include when a woman gives food or a drink to her husband she puts it on a tray with a tray cloth. When giving something to another person to do it with both hands; and when receiving something to do it either with both hands or with one hand and the other hand that cups the elbow.

As can be seen from the examples mentioned above, the code of *hlonipha* is very detailed and extensive, and overall seems to be based on age and on gender. There has been a lot of criticism (Marcus, 2008; Posel, Rudwick and Casale, 2011) that the practice of *hlonipha* undermines the status of women and that it reinforces the hierarchical, patriarchal structure of the family. Although in this study the participants stressed that respect is mutual between women and men, when asked for details of how men show respect towards women the participants battled to think of examples. Only one person mentioned that the man shows respect towards the woman by preventing disrespectful things happening. Thus, as the woman is not meant to be

alone in a room with her father-in-law, the man needs to avoid going into the room where she is, and therefore both the man and the woman are showing respect for each other by complying with the expected *hlonipha* practice. However, in general it seems to be a one way process, and therefore it seems that Marcus (2008) and that Posel, Rudwick and Casale (2011) were correct. “While one could indeed argue, that *hlonipha* as a custom, is based on mutual respect between all involved and is best captured by the proverb '*Wohlonipha nxa ufunaukuhlonishwa*' (...you must display respect if you want to be respected), it is not so easy to refute that it is primarily married women who bear a heavy burden as a result of *hlonipha* in a traditional household” (Rudwick and Shange, 2009:69).

Mr M.M. (family elder) however did not agree with this:

*You don't have to be subservient to be seen as respectful. If you are empowered it means you have got knowledge, you have got education, you know what the difference between right and wrong. You are empowered. That doesn't mean that you are better than other people. That doesn't mean that you cannot live with other people. You can live peacefully with other people, you know. Humbleness is the most important thing to me that I teach my children. I do not want them to look down at other people. I teach them the normal human values.*

When I asked about whether respect was given to the position or to the person, this distinction was difficult to determine as the history of the person in the position was also taken into account. So respect is offered within a context. For example an individual may not like what the person is doing at the moment but because that person has achieved sufficiently throughout his life in order to get to that position, he/she is respected anyway. As Mr M.M. a family elder says

*Mr M.M.: My understanding of respect, you do not respect a person because you are expecting a favour from that person or because that person is bigger than you. That is not the reason for you to respect a person. You respect a person because he or she is a human being. But there is another aspect of it. You must respect a person for what he or she is, you know. Even in the bible that is stated. If a person is a king you must respect that person for being a*

*king. If that person is an elder you must respect that person for being an elder. So you give him extra respect over and above being a human being, you give him extra respect for being an elder. If the person is a community leader, for example is a teacher here, I respect the teachers of my children because of their position..... it is difficult to separate the two, you know [the person and the position]... Maybe you are a very bad person, but because of your role, I do respect you.... Nobody can take that thing away from that person no matter what he is or how he lives his life. So that respect I don't know how to explain it but its something that is there.*

The process of speaking and not speaking in certain ways, as well as the behavioural practices that indicate respect are socially constructed and have been maintained through children's socialisation by generations of the Zulu community. However, as occurs with cultural practices, change and flexibility can result.

- **Urban vs rural *hlonipha***

Several urban participants in this research study describe negotiating the practices of respect with each other at home in the city, and then complying with the traditional practices when they visited the rural areas if it was expected. Thus Mrs R.M. showed me how she had to kneel as a child when giving adults their food, and with roars of laughter insisted that I feel her knees to see how rough and calloused they were from this practice. However her husband does not expect her to kneel to him. As he describes it, the government has specified that everyone has certain rights (see below) and so men and women are equal. As a result he feels he cannot expect his wife to kneel to him.

As part of the practice of respect the role of the daughter-in-law (*makoti*) has great importance. Here roles and respect are then not mutually exclusive. She is seen as needing to be very respectful to her husband and also to his family. She gives service to the whole family by getting up early to make tea and to make the breakfast for everyone, cleaning the house and the yard, cooking the meals for her husband and children and if necessary for the whole family, washing her own, her husband and her

children's clothes, and taking care of the children. The husband is expected to earn the money, look after the cattle and do any farming work.

As Mr T.M. describes [Traditionally] *the man look after the cattle or the farm or work somewhere else and bring food back home. Then the wife must cook and look after the children and look after housing, clean and make order, something like that. And look after young ones...Now things has changed now. Things have changed. It's not wise to leave everything upon a wife because it's a wife job, even though she works. Like myself, if my wife is out [at] a job I have to clean the house, you saw me washing dishes outside?..I have to do something that I can do during her[absence]. Because when she arrives home she will be tired from work. So I do something that I can do.*

Mrs P.M. a family elder, describes how doing the gendered roles may be applicable if the woman is a housewife, but not if both members of the couple are working, even though this may be the belief 'on the farm'.

Mrs P.M.: *So when you are at home during the day, it's for you to clean, to cook, but when [you work] the other men, they don't do nothing. They lazy. But my husband, as I am sweeping, he comes with a mop. Others they sit and they read the paper, the men, you know...But it depends where you staying to. In the farm, sometimes they still carry that 'Man is a man'....if you ask [him] to cook, he's like, you know 'it is a woman's work'.....everybody must work, ja. We've got these hands to work.*

However, this change in roles does not always happen, as Mrs A.X. (the wife in a couple) explains:

Mrs A.X.: *'Cause others even if they know that you are tired, you also go to work, you are also bringing the money but they will not want to assist with anything like, they will just come back home, sit, they don't even want to play with the kid or whatever. They just watch the television, they go to sleep. You know, so it just depends on the type of person that you have.*



This expectation of the role of *makoti* and the different gender roles can result in major conflict between husband and wife, as well as between the daughter-in-law (the *makoti*) and her in-laws. “Tensions around gender equality are also due to the urban-rural and modernist-traditionalist dichotomy and intra-ethnic difference and division” (Rudwick and Shange, 2009:67). Several participants mentioned that the husband’s sisters in particular may sit back and expect the *makoti* to serve them and the *makoti* would resent this. When I tried to clarify if this was due to the sisters being married and being the *makoti* elsewhere, and therefore being guests in their home of origin, this did not seem to be the reason. The participants said that even if the sisters still lived in the same home they sometimes still sat back and expected the *makoti* to serve them. The study’s participants suggested that either the mother-in-law or the husband would have to intervene in order to avoid conflict.

However although being the *makoti* means the woman has to work hard, she also has the status of bringing up the family’s children and teaching them the family’s practices and values. She will become the future mother-in-law and the manager of the homestead.

Mrs N.M. (social worker) describes many families’ respect for the daughter-in-law, the *makoti*, as invisible and nonexistent; but mentions that in other families, like in her married family, they show a lot of respect to the *makoti*.

Mrs N.M.: *With our culture...it [respect] becomes invisible....they take her for granted. They take advantage of her, and yet they expect, you know, great things from her...It depends on the upbringing of that particular family, because others they really respect a person like their sister, or like their mother....they cannot just take anything or ask for anything from the husband without getting permission from the makoti.*

Several of the participants such as Mrs N.M. mentioned that they had good relationships with their mother-in-law because she had intervened and clarified expectations in terms of whose role it was to serve the family and how they could all work as a team.

As mentioned, several couples living in the city indicated that they have one system for roles that they used in the city, and when returning to their home “on the farm” they would revert to the traditional roles. Mrs P.M. a family elder describes this in terms of how she dresses.

*Mrs P.M.: When I am going home...in my house I stay like this [gesturing to her clothes] but when I go farm I have to have something on my head....like when I am going to church....[For men] I think it's up to an individual because others they don't like to wear shorts and go by their in-laws, you know?*

Switching between these systems may be confusing, particularly in the beginning of a marriage when the couple are still working out their roles. If an urban couple spends most of their time in town, yet spend time on regular visits to the farm, they may inadvertently follow their urban practices, which may be labelled by the rural family as disrespectful. However the integration strategy for acculturation, (which is the maintenance of the culture of origin with the acquisition of the new culture) as mentioned in chapter two, is the most constructive in developing bicultural competency. Knowing the language and behaviours typical to the dominant culture helps with employment and finances, but spending time in their culture of origin still enables the feelings of belonging and identity (Yoon et al 2013).

However throughout this study, the discourse of how traditions were changing was evident. This discourse of change concurs with the concept that culture is dynamic. This is particularly evident with the Zulu culture that was marginalised and isolated to a certain extent throughout the colonial and Apartheid eras, but now, particularly due to urbanisation, is being impacted by the dominant Western culture. Hunter (2005) also mentions that there are fewer marriages in the Zulu community. He ascribes this to the fact that Zulu men nowadays are dependent on wage labour (rather than working in agriculture) to individually pay cash or buy cows for *ilobolo*, and as they battle to find work they struggle to do this, and to set up a home and provide for their family and obtain the *umnumzana* status. Women are being more involved in the labour market, and are therefore becoming financially independent from men. These changes, even when the couple does marry, results in changes from the traditional format. As Mr S.S. (the husband of a couple) stresses:

Mr S.S.: *Ja, it's like, each family, they've got their own culture now, each and every family got their own culture.*

Mr T.M. (the husband of a couple) as mentioned below describes that women's roles were changing with Westernisation, and Mr M.M. (a family elder) describes the impact of external forces on the Zulu traditional culture.

Mr T.M.: *In accordance to the government law, they [women] have got rights and it's not like before. And a Zulu customs mustn't conflict with the constitution.*

Mr M.M. *The globalisation has changed a lot of things. The education has changed a lot of our beliefs. The religion has changed a lot of the way we used to things and the way we think. Lots of things.*

Both men mentioned external forces that imposed change as opposed to internal processes that evolved and resulted in change. This is possibly due to the external changes being more visible. However, these external forces would not be viable without the people being open to change.

However the change in sexual roles may result in the shaming of the husband who helps his wife in the home, by others in the community. Mr T.M. describes an example.

Mr T.M.(the husband in a couple): *Most of the Zulu's look down upon you if you do that thing. This is not a man, this is a \*#\*# wife, is rude under petticoat, how can you go and fetch water for the wife? How can you cook? But it's a matter of must, if your wife say she is ... working somewhere else. Now you are here and doing nothing because you are a man. It doesn't work like that, according to my opinion.*

Mr. M.N. (the husband in a couple): *Because some families, they say if I wash the dishes, if I help [my wife] to wash the dishes, it's like she is holding me with the nose. I don't know what that means, so you don't want that. You don't*

*want them to say no, this wife is pointing things to our son but it takes a brave man to help his wife if ever you have to.*

The use of swear words denote just how unacceptable, threatening and how challenging such changes in men's role behaviour are to the community, and to other men in particular. Thus, it can be seen that the traditional practices of respect or *hlonipa* are changing through acculturation, and so each couple will practice a different variety of *hlonipha* practices.

As Mrs L.M. (social worker) stresses it is important for all social workers to understand the different practices of respect in each of the cultures.

*Mrs L.M. ....That is why I'm saying as social workers we need to understand different cultures. Cause if a white person comes into my office, like a child, I wouldn't expect that maybe from a child to look me straight into the eye when I'm talking to that person. But a white child, when that person comes in, relate a story or I'm interviewing that child and the child is just looking at me like maybe something is wrong that child has done. If I do not understand other cultures I will say that person, that child is very rude. That child is disrespectful. But because I know that other races they just look straight into your eyes. But with us, with a black child, when that child comes to me and she just, or he just look down and, I would understand that no, it's something that we grew up with. It's something, we were socialised in that way.*

Thus in her opinion it is important that all social workers understand each others' cultural practices to avoid misunderstandings. This is clearly not a simple undertaking as social workers themselves may not fully comprehend or appreciate the complexities within their own culture of origin, particularly bearing in mind that according to social constructionism the context of our life influences our view of reality, and our view of reality influences our culture in turn, and this all may occur at a subconscious level.

### 5.3.4. Ubuntu

In the diagram used to illustrate the major themes of this study, *ubuntu* is central to the others. It is the space between the others, that also connects the others and that supports the others. Muruthi (2009:17) shows the link between *ubuntu* and belonging when he summarises Tutu's discussion of *ubuntu* and he says "We are human because we live through others, we belong, we participate and we share." As mentioned in chapter two, as well as in Haselau, Kasiram and Simpson (2015) the concept of *ubuntu* is difficult to define, and to describe.

**Diagram 6: Ubuntu**



- **Helping others**

Considering how central the literature views *ubuntu* to the African culture, I found it surprising that more participants did not initially specifically mention it. The discourse used was "helping others" as described below:

Mr T.M. (the husband in a couple): *Your neighbour is important. If your neighbour is away you have to look after your neighbours home, don't just*

*say, just look on my neighbour's home, who is going inside there, you must go and make a research. What is going on in my neighbour's home, because my neighbour's home is my own home.....my child's neighbour, like my child....I can send my neighbours child to where I wish without any permission because it's just a child....Ja, its everyone's children. If your child do something wrong, I've got permission to punish your child without your permission....*

*Mr G.X. (the husband of a couple) Because my brothers problem is [my] problem. That how in our culture is. Not this thing that is happening now. And that's why people are so poor these days because we always, in like you know a big homestead, if you all stay together, I mean even if my brother is not well financially you wouldn't see that, because you all sit and you all in the same place you all eat together and everything. We share all .... That's how it used to be. Even if we all, I mean this is your house, we all stay here and then.... if you see that your neighbour is.. like, struggling you know, those days... he's got no cow to milk for his kids, I will take a cow and give it to him to, you know, so they can breed and so they can have cows, you know. You help somebody to sustain his life. You are not run down like what's happening now.*

*Mrs C.M.: Let's say, if the child's are playing outside, neighbours and, you know, when now it's the right time to give your, your child the food. You cannot call your child, oh, Simphiwe, come, come and eat, and then the others will be left outside. But you have to call them, all of them, and then, you can even put in one plate ...and then give them the spoons, and then, and then they will all eat.*

Mrs H.M. a social worker, was one of the few of the research participants who used the word *ubuntu*. She spoke about *ubuntu* being about sharing and about giving. If a wealthy person does not share their wealth, she described it as the person losing their *ubuntu*.

*Mrs H.M.: When they start getting greedy ....and this person doesn't have ubuntu, this person doesn't have humanity....to us that person is like, that person is so disgusting. He has so much but he doesn't help anyone, even*

*within his family, you know.*

Later in the interview she describes teaching her children *ubuntu*.

Mrs H.M. : *I want my children to have ubuntu....I want my children to share with other children in terms of what they know, in terms of respect, in terms of just being human. When they have more, to share with others. Like for instance let's say my daughter she is eight. Maybe the things she used to wear when she was seven are no longer fitting her. Not to like hold on to things. She must give out to other kids who are younger, just to learn the kind of environment of giving...*

The phrases such as “*this person doesn't have humanity... is so disgusting*” “*in terms of respect, in terms of just being human*” and “*to learn the kind of environment of giving*” and her tone of voice indicated how passionately she believes in the value of *ubuntu*. Besides, these words suggest a rejection of greed and materialism, and an embracing of the basic core value for people to give and care for each other as part of their personhood. The implications for caring and giving in relationships and particularly in counselling is that everyone feels respected and valued no matter what problems have resulted in them needing help.

Mr B.M. (the husband in a couple) indicated that helping each other is not only towards African people, but for everyone:

Mr B.M.(translated): *The black people are community people and we care for each other and we love each other, and it's not about me, it's about my family, it's about the community. So he says, we have more love and more caring than the whites. He says the white people, if they have their poor people begging for money somewhere they don't give it, as a result you'll find that those poor whites are now here at Enseleni living here, because they know that the black people will take care of them.*

Mr S.S. (the husband in a couple) also stressed that it is not only the family or neighbours that are helped, but that anyone, even strangers are helped.

Mr S.S. ....*that's why, mostly, you'll see black people are hiking and they're getting a lift, which is, you can't just pass someone, even, even though you don't know them, you can't just pass them and leave them elsewhere without help or something. You offer help to someone, always.*

- **Empowering others**

Several participants in this research described that through helping various members of their family, this resulted in them obtaining further education, as espoused in the meaning of Ubuntu being..... Mr G.X. and his wife Mrs A.X. described that as well as helping the family generally with groceries, they also helped particular members with paying for university fees. Mrs N.M (family elder) also described how her siblings had all had tertiary education which was only possible as she contributed financially:

Mrs N.M.: *So I believed that, if I've got, even if it's a, it's little, so, I, I support, I have to support, in order people to, to grow.*

As a result of this, these particular people were empowered, and in their turn would be able to empower others. This is an example whereby *ubuntu* is used to uplift the whole community.

- **The context of the word *ubuntu***

In the above examples, if I asked whether this was *ubuntu*, the participants would agree. However, after discussing general beliefs and practices in his married life, Mr M.'s very startled response when I asked him to describe *ubuntu* in his life warned me that there were aspects with regard to *ubuntu* that I did not understand. He explained to the translator that he understands *ubuntu* to mean his sexual passion, and he was not comfortable to talk about this, which I acknowledged. I therefore discussed the translations of the word *ubuntu* with one of the isiZulu lecturers on 14/11/2014 in the Department of Zulu at the University of UKZN, Ms G. Mkize. I was fortunate in that



she had had experience at the Office of the Premier in researching Zulu culture. She explained that although the concept of communality and helping were strong values historically in the Zulu culture, the word *ubuntu* has only recently been used to describe this, and only recently has it been linked to the phrase '*umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*'. Gade (2011) confirmed this as according to his examination of articles about *ubuntu*, it is only since 1995 that Shutte linked *ubuntu* to the proverb '*umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*'. Ms Mkize also suggested that the proverb can have an alternative meaning – “I am because we are” could relate to the birth of a child from its parents. When I shared Mr M.’s reaction to my question about the word *ubuntu* with the social workers of both FAMSA Durban and FAMSA Pietermaritzburg, they were able to understand his response and explained with a lot of laughter that maybe he had understood it as “ubuntu bhaku” which related to the man’s penis: “a male’s private parts”. No wonder that Mr M. was startled and shocked at my question, particularly bearing in mind the social construct that in Zulu culture discussing sexuality directly is disrespectful. So it seems that with time, the term *ubuntu* has expanded its meaning to include the historical abstract concept of reciprocal helping and empowering. This is a rich example of how the meaning of words can change over time depending on the context in which they are used. Wittgenstein’s metaphor of his formation of the composite family portrait showing family resemblance as mentioned in chapter one, and the idea that another person’s formation would result in a very different picture, even though it still resulted in a family resemblance, is very useful in this example. My formation and understanding of the word *ubuntu* was very different to that of Mr M.M. Not only was our verbal understanding of the word different, but our social context and resulting world view was different – based on his world view and his interpretation of the word in a sexual way resulted in him feeling shocked and horrified that a white older woman would ask him, a young Zulu man, such an intimate and disrespectful question. Fortunately my sister-in-law, an older Zulu woman or *Gogo* (grandmother) and someone whom he respects, has known Mr M.M. for many years, and the misunderstanding was immediately clarified.

## 5.4. General socially constructed discourses

- **Gender**

Gender was a dominant discourse throughout all the interviews. There was an imbalance of power in this as described above - generally the participants suggested that the men took the lead in negotiating *ilobolo*, performing the rituals, and being shown respect (*hlonipha*), although this is slowly changing. As discussed earlier, when discussing *Ubugena* (the practice of the widow marrying her deceased husband's brother) and with the practice of polygamy, the woman may choose whether to comply with this; according to most of the research participants when making decisions the woman's opinion is taken into consideration, although the man usually makes the final decision, indicating yet again dominance of the male gender. Mrs N.M. however challenged this and explained it in economic terms. She said:

Mrs N.M. (a social worker): *because they [the men] are the sources of economy they've got the power, they can decide they can do anything they want with their partners, not to mention involving them in the decision making processes. Usually a wife is not consulted in the decision making processes, and not because she hasn't got anything to say, but it's believed that when family matters are being discussed, it's men who should decide, discuss those matters. [The women] be left outside. Even if they are talking about matters that pertains to a woman, it's only men, like as I'm saying, that it's the families, that are involved with the issues. They will involve the family of the girl, and the family of the husband, but they involve [only] the males....*

Thus although the woman is represented in these discussions and in the rituals described above, she is not directly part of them – the men make the decisions, take the lead in social and spiritual rituals, and therefore have the power.

- **Age**

Age was also an important discourse, whereby the aged are shown respect whether they are a man or a woman.

Mr T.M. (the husband in a couple) described several examples of children showing and giving respect to their elders as follows:

Mr T.M.: *If the elder one gives you remaining food by her plate, you don't have to use the same plate, you have to empty that food to your own plate then wash the elder one's plate and put it there before you eat. ...You must not stand in the house while the elders are settled. You must not put a hat on the head if you talk to the elder. If elder ones talk to you, you must take off the hat and listen to what they say to you. You must not insult anyhow. You must not take ... food and eat it without permission, you have to ask someone. ...You must not sleep until the sun rises, you must wake up early and see if the yard is clean, pick up the papers, sweep, do something, if it's not a school day or holiday or weekend, do help here if you are not doing some temporary jobs as well. Don't go out at night. Don't arrive home at night what so ever. If you wish to visit your friend you must ask permission from your parent. If he says no - no. And you must not steal some neighbours things..... Children are taught this from small. And if they don't keep that, they get a good hiding, so that they grow up straight, listen, without this hiding they child will grow raw...It's a solution. But now government's law doesn't allow it, so there is a confliction. But it's our custom, but because constitution is supreme, you cannot object.*

This quote suggests a strong authoritarian code of conduct as it contained words such as you must..., you must not... , you have to... ,don't do...If these rules are not kept the child receives a “good hiding” which helps them “grow up straight”, whereas without the hiding “they will grow raw”. The contrast between the traditional practices being seen as a “solution”, and the modern government's law and values within the constitution not allowing these traditional practices which results in “confliction”, illustrates the depth of Mr T.M.'s feelings of helplessness in this area.

Mr M.N. (the husband in a couple) also mentions how a child needs to show respect for their parents, even when they are adults:

Mr M.N.: *And the kids too, they're not allowed to touch the man's head. Now my mother if she's visiting us here, she'll get very irritated when she see my kids touching me on the head. No, no, don't touch him on the head. Ja, they still believe in that....If I talk to my father... You don't look at him and you don't say words directly to say, let's say you're calling him for food, food is ready. You don't just say hey dad, food is ready. You go to him and say, food is ready, we're asking dad if he can come for eating. It's like you talk to someone else who's not here but you're actually talking to him.*

It is only when a woman is older that she is given some respect and power. As a *gogo* (grandmother) she is even allowed to perform rituals and negotiate *ilobolo*, but only if there are no men available. This suggests that there is a definite hierarchy with both age and gender, but gender seems to take priority according to this study's participants.

- **Rural vs urban living**

Rural vs urban living occurred frequently in the participants' conversations. The rural area was seen to hold and protect the Zulu rituals, traditions, practices and language; but also destructive practices were described as happening in "the deep rural areas", far away from everyday life. So the influence of modernity was seen to contaminate some of the preferred traditions, practices and language, but simultaneously modernity may protect against harmful traditions and practices.

Mrs N.M. described the practices of *hlonipha* (respect) and how the place she grew up in was in the rural area:

Mrs N.M.: *When I was growing up I saw these things happening....I grew up in Mhlabatini at Ulundi....so that is a deep rural area, you know, that's where most of the things, there's the cultural, traditional old customs are practiced, yes.*

As mentioned previously, change was a central discourse evident throughout these interviews. Many participants would describe the expected Zulu practice, and on further questioning when asked about applying it to their own lives would indicate that things were changing, and to a greater or lesser level they were doing things differently. The degree of change and responses to them also differ, resulting in uncertainty and confusion. The implications for practice mean that because the roles, expectations and ways of living for Zulu couples are changing, marriage counsellors have to be aware of this, and need to be careful of their own stereotyping. They need to be flexible and sensitive in their work with clients.

These discourses are similar to those mentioned by several authors (for example Rudwick and Shange, 2009; Marcus, 2008; Hunter, 2005; Posel, Rudwick and Casele, 2011; LeClerk-Madladla, 2008), and indicate that a strong structured hierarchy is still present in contemporary Zulu living as described by these participants, although changes are slowly occurring.

### **5.5. Traditional Marriage counselling**

“A dispute between fellow members of the community is perceived to belong to the community itself” Muruthi (2009:24). As mentioned in chapter two, Muruthi describes a traditional conflict resolution process consisting of five steps:

First the views of the victim, perpetrator, and witnesses are heard in order to find the facts and listen to everyone’s view. The perpetrator/s are encouraged to acknowledge their guilt, then to show remorse, following which they are encouraged to ask for forgiveness whilst the victim is encouraged to show mercy. After this the perpetrator would pay reparation which is usually symbolic, and finally both parties commit to reconciliation. He (2009:22) stresses that it is important that “the above process emphasises drawing upon these *ubuntu* values when faced with the difficult challenge of acknowledging responsibility and showing remorse, or of granting forgiveness”.

This process is similar to the example of marriage counselling that Nwoye (2000) used as described in chapter two. However, the participants of this study had

reservations about this process. It seems that the first step is taken by discussing it with the parents, but many participants said the process breaks down then. Some spoke about involving both the maternal and the paternal parents, but others mentioned only involving the paternal parents as mentioned below.

As Mrs N.M. (a social worker) mentions the process starts by consulting the husband's mother, and then his father. If this doesn't work, she then suggests consulting the *ilobolo* negotiators as they are known for their mediation abilities.

*Mrs N.M.: when there's marriage problems it's believed that it should be discussed with the right people first, for instance the mother or the father-in-law first, or failing which, the person or people who were leading the negotiations, the lobola negotiations, Nkomo. It might be a family member, it might not be a family member, but that is expected. That person who's expected to negotiate or mediate, if there is any, any issue or conflict. If that doesn't work, more than those family members can be called, or all relevant family members, the uncles, the elder brothers, the gogos, if there are any, they are called for all to sit around and discuss the matter and they will decide if there is anyone who has done wrong according to their judgement. They pass the judgement. They discuss matters, they pass the judgement and what should then be done. If it's their son who is wrong and then they say "Okay, he is wrong. Probably he must apologize." If it's the daughter-in-law who is, who is wrong they'll say so, and usually the apology that is expected from the daughter-in-law is to get back to her home of origin and get a cow. It could be a goat or a cow that she'll bring to the in-laws to be slaughtered to say they are now cleansing whatever mistake is done....I haven't heard of a husband being requested to get a cow to be slaughtered just because he's made a mistake.... if he's wrong, usually what is said is "Men are like that." So makotis should again accept whatever challenges she's facing...*

This example not only illustrates one of the traditional processes to ask for help with a troubled marriage, but it also illustrates difficulties in gender and age dynamics in conflict management.

Mrs P.M. a family elder, describes the present process of receiving help for a troubled marriage, but gives her own opinion as well.

*Mrs P.M.: I believe they discuss it, you know? Between husband and wife. If they can't solve, they like go to in-laws, but it's up to them. Because I think it's unfair, why go to men's family only? Maybe they should like have ...both parties, ja.*

This implies that outside, non-traditional professional marriage counselling services are not generally valued or sought in preference for the family intervention. Those who do not appreciate family assistance may therefore prefer to co-exist in the marriage, or to have a permanent separation or divorce. However others who feel the family may be biased or unable to help may prefer to come for independent professional services.

## **5.6. Generic social workers' counselling suggestions**

One of the common suggestions that was also emphasized by the FAMSA social workers in Phase 2, was to determine to what extent the person or the couple uses cultural practices.

Mrs H.M. a generic social worker, stressed that she determines their use of cultural practices , and then uses other social work skills like setting realistic goals, prioritizing, problem solving, and looking at the consequences of their behaviour.

*Mrs H.M.: I listen more....to find out what kind of people they are. If they are belief that cultural situations are going to take them out of their problems, I give them my blessing, but I add basic principles ...being realistic, having goals, being realistic about their financial situation, prioritizing. ...I can't encourage a person to slaughter a cow when they don't have basic things....I would rather ask if a goat won't do the same thing? If a goat can reach the ancestors, why not go for a goat, because that is more cheaper...also try to help them open their mind... and I ask but is that reasonable? Can you go and find a second*

*opinion from another traditional healer and find out if you have another choice of doing that same thing, but in a different way? ....I would never say a person should never do a cultural thing if they believe its going to help them better their situation. I just play around with ideas.*

Another frequent suggestion was to have knowledge of the various traditional practices. As Mrs B.S. mentions without such knowledge a social worker will not fully understand the clients' thoughts and experiences.

*Mrs B.S. : I may be a social worker, but [if] I'm not aware of ...traditional things, I might be lost, lost.....I think it is very important for us as social workers as we are working with people, even though we do not practice culture...to have some knowledge so that you can understand what your clients are talking about...what your client is experiencing.*

In her opinion one of the most important cultural values to understand is *hlonipha* (respect) as putting this into practice will allow the clients to feel valued and empowered, and it links to the social work values as well. It will result in clients being open and willing to receive counselling and to empower them. It will also prevent misunderstandings when people of different cultures have different methods of showing respect. It will assist with the development of rapport, and then when this is established the depth of the interview may be developed using social work counselling skills.

Another suggestion that Mrs N.M. makes is to have a separate interview with the wife so that her issues are heard and recognized. She stresses that the *makoti* is socially prescribed to be quiet and respectful, so she may not mention her problems.

*Mrs N.M.: Listen to the voice of the female because mostly that the person who is not vocal about her feelings. They just keep quiet because they've been brought up like that. They keep quiet even if things are not going well. They keep quiet just because they want to be perceived as good partners or family*



*members, or makotis in this family. That is why you'd find most of them going into conditions like depressions, stress, and things like that. They mostly present with hypertension, sugar diabetes, ulcers, you name it. Even attempted suicides...it's mostly the females, so listening to that particular person, it's, its very important.....even if you listen to the other parties as well, but they may tend to overpower a female, such that they may not say a word when other family members are around....*

The depth of her concern that Mrs N.M. feels about the issue of the *makoti* being silenced through the cultural strictures is evident in the repetition of her words “they keep quiet...” This discourse links with the gender dynamic mentioned above, and illustrates the powerlessness experienced by some *makotis*. Interestingly this silence did not come out strongly in the couple's interviews, even when I asked whether respect equals obedience. Some agreed, but stressed that there were ways and means of sharing their opinion and being heard. This is possibly due to most of them being seen together, so even though I interviewed both of them in each other's presence about their own life, maybe the *makoti*'s voice was overpowered. Most of the couples did feel comfortable however to share some of the *makoti*'s problems such as the unrealistic expectations of the *makoti* doing the all housework “on the farm”.

This silencing of the *makoti* not only implies that there is male dominance but also that in the event of problems experienced by females, she may not believe that she is allowed to give her point of view, and also that any change will result if she does so.

### **5.7. Conclusion to analysis of Phase 1**

As can be seen from the above analysis, there were four main themes that had equal value when looking at the rituals, values and practices that were meaningful in marriage for Zulu couples, Zulu family elders and Zulu social workers. These were the values of belonging, respect, spirituality and *ubuntu*. During the analysis, as illustrated by the different examples above, it was evident that there were no major differences between the information given by the couples, the family elders or the

social workers (although the social workers also gave examples of their work with Zulu clients).

### **5.8. Suggestions for marriage counselling – Phase 2**

The above results were confirmed in my discussions with the FAMSA social workers in Durban and in Pietermaritzburg with examples from their own lives. In view of this, I will not repeat them. However, the main objective for speaking to the FAMSA social workers was to develop best practice guidelines in professional marriage counselling with Zulu couples so this is the focus of this section.

- **The process of the marriage counselling interview**

The social workers at FAMSA Durban and FAMSA Pietermaritzburg both stressed that the social worker needs to treat their clients with respect. “Social workers are rude because we don’t greet properly”. According to the social workers at FAMSA Durban, usually strangers, and particularly women, do not shake hands, but it is wise to wait for the man to extend his hand first if he chooses to shake hands. The respect includes the usual guidelines for manners that are instilled in social workers at university such as don’t talk whilst they are talking, give them enough time to talk, listen well, put the phone on silent.

When asked about giving biscuits and water as a sign of respect, the social workers in Durban said that a lot of mothers would put the biscuits straight in their bag to give it to their children at home (an example of *ubuntu*), and they do not take glasses for water as these get stolen from the offices that they share with other organisations in the community. FAMSA social workers often use offices at court. This can cause misunderstandings. They stressed that part of the role induction and orientation at the beginning of the first interview was to explain that the man is not under arrest, but the social worker is there to help both of them to improve their marriage.

Another fear, because gender is such an entrenched issue in the Zulu community, and because the wife often comes for help first, is that the two women (the social worker and the wife) will take sides against the husband, so this needs clarification during orientation. However, “because even to just to voice your opinion, you [the wife] are not allowed” it is important to listen to her voice. Yet at the same time according to one of the FAMSA Durban social workers “women are hiding behind the [women’s] rights. It is not her right to not be a good wife. The government is not between them, the marriage is between them.” Thus it is important to explain to both that you need to get both of their opinions. “It’s a shift from traditional ways to a more modern way to talk about things together so you can understand each other”.

The social workers mentioned that they teach life skills such as conflict management, but use this to teach respect. They will introduce themselves by their title and surname e.g. I am Mrs Sithole.” Both FAMSA Durban and FAMSA Pietermaritzburg social workers spoke about using the Zulu title of Ma/mama or Baba with their surname e.g. Baba Zondi. This was explained as Ma/mama and Baba are titles of respect in the Zulu community, but as they are professional social workers and do not have the status of being a child, they use their clients’ surname. “You are there to help them, you are not their child”. Age can be an issue, especially bearing in mind the respect that is given to the elderly. Clients often call the young social workers “my child”. They might say “when you hear my story, you are going to cry with me, so I don’t want to even start with you. Go fetch me someone who is old.” Another example given was “... after I have undermined this child”.

According to FAMSA Durban social workers the rituals that occur throughout an individual’s life instil a sense of belonging to the family. However they stressed that the way the rituals are performed is changing. Thus for example there was the suggestion that urbanisation and modernisation increased changes that occurred in rituals as opposed to change that would occur as a natural evolution of a culture. Of interest was that although the rituals gave the family members a sense of belonging, the format of the traditional rituals differ from area to area depending on the particular *sangoma* that was consulted. This difference also arose because the family elders would protect the information on the process and the meaning of the ritual, and so young people were seen as disrespectful if they asked questions about the rituals. As a

result the social workers at both FAMSA Durban and FAMSA Pietermaritzburg considered that it was very important to determine the level and types of use of ritual in the relationship when taking a family history in the first session. This information needs to relate to what rituals each person experienced growing up, the rituals used in the process of getting married, as well as the rituals they have used with the children. This will give an indication of the sense of belonging that they both have to the extended family, and it may highlight potential problems.

An example mentioned was that if the whole family contributed cattle or money to the *ilobolo*, there may be family expectations and obligations that the *makoti* needs to work for all of the husband's family, whereas according to the FAMSA Durban social workers, she only has obligations to do work for her parents-in-law. There may also be resentment built up from the husband's family if the couple do not live at his parents' home, and so the *makoti* is only present to do chores in his childhood home when she visits, yet they have all contributed to the *ilobolo*.

Finding out about the rituals and the extent of belonging these give when taking the history will also allow the social worker to determine the extent to which both members of the couple are accepted in each other's family. The FAMSA social workers agreed with the meaning behind the *kist* as reinforcing the permanence of marriage, but said that there is a marriage song that says "*don't kill her, don't beat her, if something is wrong, bring her back*". As a result they felt it was possible to challenge the idea that once the wife belonged to her husband's family there was no turning back. However as one of the social workers mentioned it is the choice of the individual how they respond to a marital problem, and not where they live:

*If you stay there, you must go forward. If your marriage fails, you still go forward. You must...*

A benefit of the family as opposed to the individual contributing to the *ilobolo* occurs when the sister's *ilobolo* that was received is used to help with her brother's *ilobolo* payment. It is an example of the family and community's interconnectivity and the cyclical flow that can occur.

One of the changes that the social workers noted was that with female headed households where the matriarch is the bread winner and the male is absent, she will use her own (male) relatives for *ilobolo* negotiations.

When discussing respect with the social workers of both FAMSA Pietermaritzburg and FAMSA Durban as part of the group discussion in Phase 2 of the research study, it was apparent that in all cultures there are certain practices of respect, particularly towards the elderly, many of which are similar. However, in the Zulu community the practices of respect were seen as crucial. Although during the marriage process the bride is instructed in the role and dress expectations of her husband's family, one social worker mentioned that the traditional dress code that is prescribed by the husband's family is more relaxed now that many of the older generation have relaxed their own dress as a result of modernisation. However the expectation is that the bride still needs to be "respectful in her doings".

It is important, as suggested by both the FAMSA Durban and Pietermaritzburg social workers, to clarify in counselling the couple's and the in-law's role expectations, as well as the expectations of general practices of respect, because of the complexity and the high importance that is placed on *hlonipha*. Although not only a Zulu problem, in law issues are exacerbated because of the obligations and expectations of the *makoti*. One of the social workers mentioned "if you have to go there on Saturday, your body will start changing on Wednesday".

When discussing the issue of respect or *hlonipha*, it is important for Western social workers to be aware that respect does not only relate to individual respect, but also to respect for and from the family, and respect for and from the community. Thus it is important to discuss the expectations of both of their roles within the community, the family and the couple. An example of this that a social worker gave was that if the wife comes home late, even if she speaks to her husband respectfully and calls him by the correct title, her behaviour will be viewed as disrespecting him by the community, which is unacceptable. Thus, another example given was that even if the mother-in-law gives permission for the *makoti* not to wear the "doek" or head scarf denoting a married woman, the community would judge her as disrespectful if she went bare-headed. Her compromise was to wear the *doek* in public, and the rest of the time to

keep it in her handbag. Thus on one hand, *hlonipha* can result in social conformity and rigidity, yet conformity as Darley and Blankson (2008) indicate is also viewed highly in Zulu society.

Both the FAMSA Durban and the FAMSA Pietermaritzburg social workers did not agree with Nwoye's (2000) suggestion that the counsellor acts as judge to determine if and who is not complying with traditional role practices, that they need to admit fault, and apologise. The FAMSA social workers in both Durban and in Pietermaritzburg stressed that because the Zulu cultural practices are in flux, the role of judge or adjudicator has no real value when a couple seeks help, rather the couple needs help to negotiate these.

## **5.9. Conclusion – Phase 2**

From the above comments and suggestions from the FAMSA social workers, it was apparent that specific marriage counselling practices are relevant to Zulu clients. Respectful practices such as greeting correctly, and listening well to both partners is important to build rapport. As the wife or *makoti*'s voice is often silenced it is important to hear her concerns separately from her husband so she feels at ease to speak. As gender is an issue, it is also important to address any concerns that the Zulu man has about discussing his problems with (often a younger) woman. Thus seeing the couple separately initially may be necessary.

Role induction and orientation is highly important. The traditional practice when there is a marriage problem is based on a hierarchical process where family members determine who is to blame and what reparation is necessary. Nwoyo (2000) followed a similar process in his marriage counselling, but the FAMSA social workers challenged this role as judge, and stressed their role was to facilitate the discussions of the couple. So the explanation of the social worker's role was crucial.

When taking the history in the first interview it was emphasised that the level and type of rituals used need to be clarified both when the couple were growing up, which rituals were used in the process of them getting married, and which rituals they use with their children. This will indicate the level of belonging in the family. Both FAMSA Durban and FAMSA Pietermaritzburg social workers mentioned that there is a need to clarify expectations in the code of dress and language, as well in the role expectations both at home and in the extended family and in the community.

However, impacting across all of these are the changes occurring in the Zulu lifestyle. With such a rich culture that impacts on marriage, yet which is in flux, and which results in each family and couple having varying degrees of intensity and compliance with the rituals, values and practices, it is extremely necessary that all social workers understand and use guidelines for marriage counselling with Zulu couples.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **6.1. Introduction**

In this final chapter, I summarize the research process and some limitations to this study that need to be considered when reading this last chapter. I then examine the potential marital problems that Zulu couples may experience using the model derived from the themes that were indicated in the previous chapter. I suggest some best practice guidelines that will assist social workers to offer marriage counselling for Zulu couples, and how these suggestions may translate into the prevention of relationship problems. Policy that may facilitate best practice strategies for counselling Zulu couples are also suggested. Finally I suggest research that may be conducted in the future, based on this study's methodology and findings.

#### **6.2. Summary of research process**

This research study was based on a qualitative research design using snowball sampling to find respondents willing to participate to fulfil the aim and purpose of this study which was to explore contemporary Zulu marriage in order to develop applicable, best practice guidelines for marriage counselling with Zulu couples.

In order to tap into indigenous knowledge systems as recommended by Bar-On (2003), the following objectives were deemed necessary in this study, these having been outlined in the first chapter, but stated here again to facilitate reading and understanding in this section of the research report:

- to determine and identify which values, customs, rituals and practices Zulu couples have found relevant during childhood, courtship, wedding and marriage, and how these give meaning to their relationship.



- to determine and identify which values, customs, rituals, processes and practices Zulu elders have used when consulted by their family members for assistance with their marriage problems.
- to determine and identify how social workers who work generically use particular Zulu values and practices to assist their clients.

The study consisted of in depth interviews with twelve Zulu couples who identified themselves as married; in depth interviews with nine family elders who had given relationship advice to members of their family and ten social workers who worked with couples and families generically. They were asked about the rituals, values, beliefs and practices that they found meaningful for marriage. This information was shared further with social workers from FAMSA who specialise in marriage counselling, who gave their own comments about the results from these interviews, and who gave input about their experience in marriage counselling with Zulu couples in order to fulfil the final objective :

- Based on this information, to develop best practice guidelines in professional marriage counselling with Zulu couples with the assistance of specialized marriage counsellors.

Social constructionism was used as the theoretical framework for this study, and so this data was analysed in terms of the themes that were recognised, as well as particular discourses that were identified which were based on the social context in which the respondents lived and which gave meaning (either positive or negative) to their marriages.

### **6.3. Limitations of this study**

The limitations of this study, some of which were previously mentioned in the methodology chapter, need to be reiterated here when reading this chapter on

conclusions and recommendations in order to provide a suitable context for this discussion. They are:

- a) As social workers are encouraged to start where the client is and to move at the client's pace, it may be considered that this information is not novel and therefore irrelevant. However in South Africa as a result of apartheid, all the races have lived parallel lives and generally have not had much contact with each other. Therefore some social workers may not have the in depth information required to understand the intricacies and nuances of Zulu marriage. In addition most people are not aware of the extent that one's world view influences one's thinking, values, beliefs and behaviour. As Pedersen (2009) mentions, therapists' sense of cultural identity will influence how issues are viewed and it will influence the purpose and the process of counselling, and therefore he suggests that a cultural centred approach expands the repertoire of responses available to counsellors, and emphasises the importance of the clients' context. Thus asking about these four values of belonging, spirituality, respect (*hlonipha*) and *ubuntu* that have been identified that have relevance in Zulu marriage, will ensure the social worker can ask the client for their personal clarifications of meaning and expectations of each. This is important as Clark (2000:6) warns that using a group-membership version of culture results in overgeneralisations – “it fails to recognize that people who share the same group membership often exhibit considerable cultural variation”. This is particularly important to be aware of with the Zulu culture that is in a state of flux, and so there may be huge variations in how each couple thinks about and manifests these values.
- b) I spoke to twelve couples, nine family elders, and ten social workers in order to triangulate the sources of information that I obtained. This information was then discussed and evaluated with the social work staff of FAMSA Durban and FAMSA Pietermaritzburg. However, this is a small sample and the participants were mainly based in Durban, and in a town in Northern KwaZulu-Natal and in some of the rural areas within 50 km of that town. Other Zulu participants from other areas of KZN may have different views. Hence any generalisation cannot be undertaken, as per the clear finding that

even within this area, there are many variations in the practice of spirituality and ancestor veneration, the use of ubuntu, as well as in the practice of social roles and respect.

- c) This research was focussed on Zulu people in KwaZulu-Natal, and so it is only applicable to Zulu people in this area. People from other tribes within this area, or from other race and ethnic groups will have different views, particularly if one considers the underlying concept of social constructionism. Understanding from this study how richly layered cultural experiences, beliefs and values may be in one tribal group, this illustrates how cautious one needs to be in applying these results to other regions and groups.
- d) As mentioned in Chapter 4, I am a white, middle-aged, middle-class, urban woman and in this study, I was speaking to Zulu people of all ages, all classes, living in both rural and urban areas. Therefore my own social background will have influenced my interviews as well as influenced the themes that I noticed in my results. However, my sister-in-law, who is Zulu, and was brought up in and who still often visits a rural area and who lives in the small town in Zululand accompanied me to most of the interviews in town and in the rural areas. She also translated for me when necessary. She was able to ask for further information, or to explain the nuances of an interview with me in the presence of the participant if necessary. I was also aware of reflexivity and debriefed regularly with my supervisors. This may have coloured the results in two ways: that results were more authentic as they were thoroughly appreciated by a research assistant who understood some of the complexities of culture and /or that adding the research-assistant who is my sister-in-law, may have resulted in over-emphasis of aspects that did not merit attention, as my sister-in-law would have erred on the side of caution. Interestingly, when I have met any of the participants later in other settings, they were eager to continue our conversation and to provide me with more information. This demonstrates their comfort in having shared and wanting to continue to share information with me.

- e) There was a great deal of data to transcribe; hence the audiotapes were given to Typescript Pty Ltd for transcribing. Some of the interviews were translated, and these translations were checked by the staff at Typescript Pty Ltd. It is unlikely that information during transcription was lost or misinterpreted as Typescript Pty Ltd is a reputable company that deals with court reports regularly. Each transcript is produced with a proof reader's certificate. However, based on the extent of information produced from the audiotape of the interviews, it is possible that fatigue may have given way for some transcription to be inaccurate.

The following represents a summary of the key findings of the study, consistent with the objectives set out above, and within the framework of the above limitations. I will first describe some of the conclusions of potential problems, and then at the end I will suggest some recommended guidelines that could be useful in counselling with Zulu couples.

#### **6.4. Potential problems in Zulu marriages**

The potential problems that are identified are particularly due to the social context in which they develop. As social constructionism indicates, people's world view, beliefs, values and behaviour arise from, and are influenced by the context. It is for this reason that it was important to identify the particular values, beliefs and behaviour that Zulu couples experience as meaningful in marriage as this will influence the marital counselling that is needed.

Using the diagram from the previous chapter as a template to visualize them within the relationship, the following four values that were identified in this study are presented in summary form to highlight the particular problems that possibly could arise in each. Although in the previous chapter the discussion of the values started with exploring the concept of belonging as that had dominated in the interviews, in this chapter I will be starting with the value of respect as it is one of the first things

that clients notice when coming to an interview. It is a very important value in setting the tone of the interview from the beginning, and enabling the clients to feel comfortable asking for and accepting counselling.

#### **6.4.1. Respect/*Hlonipha***

In exploring the first value of respect or *hlonipa*, it was evident that potential problems could arise from either one of the couples not using the particular respectful practices that are socially prescribed, either to each other or to members of both families. It is therefore important for the marriage counsellor to be aware of what these practices entail and when they are necessary. Bearing in mind the difficulty in differentiating issues of respect between the person and the position as mentioned in the previous chapter, it is important to address this in depth. One of the frequent discourses that arose in this study was between traditional practices and Christian practices, as well as between traditional practices and modernity, and between rural and urban living. Because there is such a wide range of possible behaviours with the code of *hlonipa* in these contexts, it is also important to clarify where the couples stand on each of these, as well as whether they have a dual or multiple system of negotiating them. This is particularly important with respect as it was such a fundamental value for the respondents.

Many social workers who work with couples have probably experienced that one of the common complaints, particularly from men, is that they feel disrespected, whilst often women feel unloved, voiceless and taken for granted. As Love and Stosny (2007) indicate with American couples, there is a biological difference that results in women being fearful and anxious, which leads them to want close connection through love and (financial and physical) protection, whilst men are sensitive to shame and so need to feel worthy and respected. As the Zulu culture stresses respect through the code of *hlonipha*, and as the participants all mentioned respect as a basic Zulu value, any signs of disrespect such as shouting, swearing and not complying with the verbal and behavioural expectations of *hlonipha* can cause marital problems. Both the

husband, and in particular his wife are encouraged to show respect through speaking quietly and not challenging the other. As a result, any issues may be ignored and not dealt with. Given the potential for any relationship to experience the afore-mentioned, the likelihood of disrespect in the marriage is inevitable, so addressing such incidents at a practical level is extremely important, as is described in detail below, so that an alternative, respectful method of communication, conflict management and negotiation is possible.

#### **6.4.2. Belonging**

As discussed in depth in the previous chapter, certain rituals and rites of passage resulted in respondents feeling they belonged to the family. This feeling appeared to have great importance to the point that when the brides were introduced to the family and community at their marriage, they were introduced through their family of origin and through their ancestors, and the place they belonged to. The process of *ilobolo* and the various rituals of exchanging gifts resulted in the transfer of the bride from belonging to her family of origin to belonging to the groom's family, where she becomes the *makoti*. There was a strict demarcation of roles in traditional families where, in particular, expectations of the *makoti* or daughter-in-law were identified and she is expected to work hard at housework, laundry and childcare, even if she is working outside the home. However many couples would negotiate their own expectations of roles between them, as occurs with all married couples, but this is more complex with Zulu couples due to the possibility of them living in two different worlds, and so conflict can arise when each other's expectations are not met. The complexity of such discussions may not be apparent to the couple or even to the social worker because their own world view and life experiences are taken for granted. As indicated in social constructionism our own beliefs, values and behaviour are developed and reinforced through socialisation, so in our view of "reality", we may assume there is only one way to do something (Burr, 2003). The complexity of discussions about role expectations is also increased because of the gender and age dynamics mentioned in the previous chapter, and so either the husband's or the *gogo's* (the matriarch of the family) views may take priority, particularly in order to belong to her husband's family, the *makoti* or daughter-in-law may be expected to comply.

As mentioned in the previous chapter there may be problems specifically between the sisters and the *makoti*/daughter-in-law, particularly if the sisters sit back and don't help. Generally it is useful as mentioned in the previous chapter if the mother-in-law can intervene and so the husband may need to address this with his mother. In this study several of the men assisted their wives with childcare and the household chores in their own home if the wife worked outside the home as well, and either reverted back to the traditional roles when visiting family in the rural areas, or faced being shamed by family and community members if they continued to help their wives. The negotiation of roles of both the husband and the wife in their own home and in that of their in-laws' home is therefore important in order to enable the acceptance of the *makhoti* so she can fully belong to her married family.

This sense of belonging is also important to address when discussing issues of divorce and separation. As mentioned by the participants of this study in the previous chapter, divorce is not acknowledged in the Zulu community, but as the wife belongs to her husband's family, she may still live within the homestead, or have her own home elsewhere, and she is still able to participate in family rituals; whilst her husband moves on with his life and can even take a second wife. Thus it is relevant to examine how the daughter-in-law can maintain contact with her in-laws after divorce or separation, so that she can hold on to that sense of belonging. This process is very different to that in Western communities where contact with the in-laws can be diminished.

#### **6.4.3. Spirituality**

As mentioned in the previous chapter, many of the respondents belonged to a particular religion, some of them believed in ancestors while others didn't. This is similar to Afeke and Verster's (2004:50) comment that "views [of Christians] regarding ancestor veneration vary from total opposition, to neutrality, to accommodation." This aspect of spirituality needs to be clarified with the couple in terms of what they feel comfortable with, and if and how they relate to their ancestors. There seems to be a continuum regarding the degree to which Christians, for example, participate in family functions. At one end, some indicate that they would not attend

at all; others compromise and indicate they will attend but will not be part of the ritual with the ancestors, and will not eat the goat meat; whilst others are quite comfortable to participate in the whole ritual, eating the goat meat and enjoying the function. Bearing this in mind, and the fact that the belief in God is a strong value in the Zulu community as mentioned by Thabede (2008), problems can occur with the practice of spirituality in everyday life. Thus for example, not only which church is attended, but also which daily practices are relevant such as praying, invoking the ancestors with *mphephe*, blessing the home, and protecting the home and its occupants from bad luck, all need in depth discussion and negotiation of the parties in the relationship. Mention is made of “parties in the relationship” as it is likely that there is influence from family and friends, all of which must be considered. So, besides competing demands and sometimes conflicting demands of traditional and modern values, direct influence by significant others is also at play.

When a particular ritual or rite of passage has not occurred, any issues might be seen as being due to the fact that the ancestors are angry, and therefore need to be appeased by either completing the ritual or by doing a thanksgiving ritual. Sometimes therefore, this ritual may occur out of the order of the developmental stages, for example when the social worker Mrs M.T. was experiencing problems, one of the beliefs she had was that it was due to her mother-in-law never having had the *umemulo* (coming of age) ceremony and therefore she had never been blessed by her ancestors from her family of origin, and that her husband had also not finished paying *ilobolo*. So she felt that she did not truly belong to his family, and that her situation would not change until these rituals had occurred, even though her mother-in-law had died. When I asked whether she could use another ritual (even a Christian ritual as she was Christian) instead or if this was forbidden, she agreed it would be allowed and that she just had not thought of it. It is therefore necessary to respect the beliefs of the couple and determine with them whether the traditional ritual needs to be done, or whether they can use an alternative ritual. Such a discussion may go a long way in preventing spiritual and practical distress for the couple.



#### **6.2.4. Ubuntu**

The potential problems in these areas occur when the couple have different ideas of how to help others. For example they may argue about the extent of help given to each of their family. There may also be issues relating to self vs. others. There needs to be a balance between individual, couple and family fun time as well as having stress management. Because of the strong value of family and community, sometimes this takes precedence over individual time. This could mean that they may compromise on their individual and couple time and the *makoti* spends her time serving the family which might breed resentment. As a result when courting each other they will do things for fun as a couple but often after marriage the couple and individual fun time decrease, and family time increases as any leisure time is taken with visiting the family. As a result the couple bond is not being reinforced and as mentioned in chapter three the attraction to each other may be diminished with resulting marital problems.

These possible issues mentioned above arise from the particular social context and resulting beliefs on marriage in the Zulu community. Therefore in order to overcome these, the following best practice guidelines are suggested:

#### **6.3. Recommended guidelines for marriage counselling with Zulu couples**

The guidelines suggested hereunder derive from the suggestions made by the generic social workers, as well as the FAMSA social workers, as well as from my knowledge and experience of western counselling methods. They are practical ways in which the aforementioned problems can be addressed.

It is recommended that the following guidelines are used by social workers who are counselling Zulu couples. It is also recommended that they are used in the teaching and learning of students' counselling skills, particularly in family and marital practice courses. Even trained social workers could benefit as part of their in-service training programmes, and/or via courses that contribute to their continuing professional

development. Further, these guidelines are worth discussing and debating academically in applicable journals.

### **6.3.1. Respect**

As mentioned previously the use of respectful behaviours is extremely important and therefore the social worker her/himself needs to consciously make use of these from the beginning. This will also help breakdown some of the power imbalances that are the residue of apartheid if the social worker is a different race, as well as the power imbalance inherent in the counsellor/client relationship. Hence firstly the therapist must be aware of and put into practice small, but important aspects of respect or *hlonipa*. Greeting clients is a basic politeness but social workers are often busy and rushed with queues of clients waiting, so greetings can also be overlooked. Greeting in the Zulu community has great value. Some people like shaking hands (sometimes just the tip of the fingers or the more complicated handshake which involves changing the position of the hands whilst interlinking the thumbs) whilst some prefer not to shake hands. The client can indicate through their nonverbal behaviour which they prefer, but the need to greet respectfully, using the title of “mama”, “baba”, or “gogo” with the client’s surname, (similar to using Mr or Mrs), rather than using their first name only, is of extreme importance in the Zulu community, and will help make the client feel at ease, and it cannot be stressed enough. The FAMSA social workers explained that they would use the traditional title of respect such as “Ma” or “Gogo” depending on the age of the person, but then would add the surname, a modern practice, in order to show respect towards that particular individual as well as to indicate their own role as a professional, rather than as a child or family member. So showing respect through using the title and the name is very valuable. Having a carafe of water or juice (and even biscuits) available on a tray, and offering it at the beginning of the interview whilst the intake form is completed or the social worker’s role is explained also shows the clients respect, particularly as many clients have travelled from afar for their interviews.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, I received this courtesy in all my interviews with the couples, the family elders and several social workers, except with one couple,

who apologised specifically for the lack of respect as they didn't have water or food. Offering a drink is a simple basic behaviour that is based on *hlonipha* practices. Speaking calmly and quietly, and listening with full attention should be part of all social worker's skills, but again this can be overlooked in the rush of overwhelming work. I was privileged to observe the respect and compassion that my colleagues had for their clients who were waiting, or who visited the office unexpectedly.

When doing a role induction and explaining expectations of counselling, an important aspect to consider is that of asking questions. In the Zulu community asking too many questions is seen as disrespectful (Rosenblatt and Nkosi, 2007) so part of role induction needs to include the explanation that questions are necessary to get the information of the history of the relationship, and therefore permission needs to be asked to do this, but to also indicate to the couple that if they choose not to answer the question, this is acceptable.

When obtaining information about the family background it is important to explore and bear in mind the dichotomies of urban vs. rural, traditional vs. Christian, male vs. female, old vs. young, and their differing ways of showing respect.

Disrespect is often seen to include shouting and swearing in arguments. As a result it is important to explain the biology of the brain that occurs with conflict as mentioned in chapter one, and to clarify the resulting difference between reactive conflicts as opposed to respectful discussions. Practices used in meditation and mindfulness are useful to calm the limbic system, particularly in amygdale in the brain so that discussions can be more conscious and less hostile. One of the important beliefs to clarify is whether the couple believe that respect equals obedience. As Mr M.M. mentioned in the previous chapter there is a difference between humility and obedience. Several couples commented that the man preferred a discussion with his wife in order to make joint decisions but that these discussions need to be respectful.

As a result practices like the Imago Intentional Dialogue, which is based on a conscious, structured way of communicating so that each person feels heard and understood, can be useful as the couple are coached how to use the dialogue in the interview session. The need for appreciation can be incorporated into the teaching of

communication skills and the Imago Dialogue, with the explanation that appreciation and acknowledgement can increase positive communication and respect. This can be linked to the traditional use of praise singing as discussed below. It may be necessary to teach conflict management and negotiation skills. As mentioned previously the discussion on the expectations of their roles, and how to show respect within these roles, needs to include both at home and in the rural area. The couple also need to clarify with each other how they already show respect for each other, as sometimes respectful practices may be taken for granted or not noticed, whereas disrespectful practices are given prominence and are thus more apparent.

The circular questions used in the Milan approach to marital and family therapy as mentioned in chapter three are very useful in this regard. Asking each of them:

- “How do you show respect at home to your husband/wife?”
- “How do you show respect on the farm to your husband/wife?”
- “How do you show respect to your parents?”
- “As a child, how were you expected to show respect to your elders?”
- “How do you expect your children to show you respect?”
- “What is different between the way you as a child were taught to show respect, and the way you are teaching your children to show respect?”
- “When your husband/wife shows respect to your parents, how do you feel?”
- “When your husband/wife is disrespectful towards your parents according to your understanding, how does this make you feel? What does he/she do? What do you do then? What happens next?”
- “When your children are disrespectful to you, how do you feel? What do you do when your children are disrespectful to you? What does your partner do when the children are disrespectful to you? What happens then? And what happens after that?”
- “When you see your children being disrespectful towards your husband/wife how do you feel? What does your husband/wife do? What do you do?”
- “If you could wave a magic wand, what would the practice of showing respect/*hlonipha* look like in the future? What would be the same? What would be different? What small steps would it take to get there?”
- “What do you do that contributes towards a respectful home?”
- “What do you do that contributes towards disrespect in the home?”

The above questions allow each person to describe their experience of *hlonipha* as a child and as an adult, they track the patterns of behaviour that occur when *hlonipha* is either present or absent, they look at what is different, and they use hypothetical, future orientated questions to determine what each person needs to do in order to change. This illustrates that everyone in the family has an impact on such abstract concepts such as respect or *hlonipha*, and that causality is not linear, but circular. It also gives the family ‘news of difference’ when each of them is asked similar questions that build on each other.

However the disadvantage of circular questions with Zulu couples is that it is seen as disrespectful to ask too many questions. Therefore the social worker needs to explain the need for such questions in the role orientation in the first interview. Otherwise, similar information can be obtained with a technique used in Imago Relationship therapy called sentence stems. Instead of the question, the Imago coach uses an unfinished statement which the couple is asked to complete when using the Intentional Dialogue e.g. instead of “what do you feel when your husband shouts at you?” the coach would give the unfinished statement “when I am shouted at, I feel...” and the person repeats it and finishes the comment in their own words.

The idea of externalising used in narrative therapy can also be used. The couple can be asked to describe *hlonipha* – for example is it a fierce lion that roars when it is being ignored, and purrs when it is welcomed in the home? What effect does the absence of *hlonipha* have on the home/on work/school/on friends/on you when the lion roars? What effect does each person have on it? – do they ignore *hlonipha* which results in roars, or do they welcome *hlonipha* which results in purrs? Maybe they do both at different times. Do they want more or less *hlonipha* from each person? Why?

If they choose to increase *hlonipha*, what is their intention as an individual to do to increase it, what do they hope will change as a result, how does this impact on their dreams and on their values? If the wife and the husband worked together as a team to increase the purrs of *hlonipha* in the home, what would the team intend to do differently? What small steps can they take as a team to increase the purrs of *hlonipha*

in the home? What are their hopes and dreams? How would it impact on their principles and values as a couple, and on their principles and values as a family?

The relative influence of the lack of respect and the welcoming of respect into the home is explored in terms of the impact of the problem on the whole life of the family members, as well as the impact of each person on respect. They are each asked to evaluate whether or not they want respect to be increased, and to justify why. The final questions are the scaffolding questions that move from the landscape of action to the landscape of identity to increase the abstract nature of how the intention to act will impact on their principles and values. This results not just in outside changes (a thin description), but it also grows the family and its members internally (a thick rich description) that in its turn changes and empowers the community.

It is important to note that the use of the above descriptions of possibilities to constructively discuss, understand and process the issue of respect will depend on the epistemology of the social worker, their particular style and preference, and in particular which suits the particular couple.

These possibilities are also useful when processing the feelings of belonging, spirituality and ubuntu.

### **6.3.2. Belonging**

This is linked to the above point in that in order to belong to a particular family, their practices of respect need to be adhered to. Hence, the practice pathways of demonstrating respect and belonging are linked, and therefore they will not be repeated here. The more the *makoti* fits in with her husband's family's expectations of her, and the more she shows them respect, the more she is accepted by the family. Unlike Western families where the young couple are expected to become independent from both their families, and to form a new family system that incorporates expectations and values from both families, in the Zulu culture the daughter-in-law is expected to join and belong to her husband's family and take on their values, beliefs and practices.

Expectations therefore need clarification, especially as mentioned previously, many couples have a dual system of having one set of expectations at home and another more traditional set of expectations “on the farm”, and so this needs to be taken into account when clarifying roles in the home. This dichotomy may manifest and give rise to disagreements around discipline, which can further strain relationships in the couple and family. They might need to negotiate accordingly as the couple’s expectations of the children need to be similar, because the daughter-in-law or *makoti* is the person who teaches the children what the husband’s family expects generally, especially in terms of expressing respect as mentioned earlier in chapter two and five, and as seen above. Importantly therefore there needs to be common ground for the discipline of the children so there is consensus in the couple of what constitutes appropriate behaviour. Since there is bound to be several significant others in the family, any in-law issues also need to be clarified so that the cycle of respect is complete. If the daughter-in-law feels that she belongs, and is accepted and respected by her husband’s family, she in turn can feel and show respect towards them herself, and teach her children to do so as well, and the more she shows respect and fulfils the expectations of her in-laws, the more she will be accepted, welcomed and acknowledged in the family. In the same way, the less she is welcomed and respected and encouraged to belong, the less she will show respect and fulfil her role of *makoti* with grace and pleasure. This reciprocal process is wonderfully illustrated with circular questions as seen in the example above.

Imago Relationship Therapy also allows both members in the couple to see the reciprocal nature of how behaviour, both in the present and in the past, can impact relationships. The couple in dialogue is asked to breathe deeply and relax their body and mind in order to relax. It is often useful to explain the biology of the brain in love, and in conflict and trauma as mentioned in chapter three in order to clean and detoxify the space between them (the relationship lake), so that the speaker can use their prefrontal cortex to invite and welcome their partner to cross the bridge to their island in order to see their world through their eyes. The listener leaves their own thoughts and feelings behind on their island in order to do so. The listener mirrors what the speaker has said, and validates and empathises with it until the speaker has finished what they want to say, before the listener gives their opinion, during which they are

mirrored, validated and empathised with. The respectful and calm manner in which communication happens during this interaction is similar to the ideal way to show respect/*hlonipha* in the Zulu culture. Thus the process is intentional and structured, and so the relational space is safe. If there is a need for a behaviour change request, this follows the same format, but the link to childhood feelings and concerns that have resulted in buttons being pressed with resulting reactivity, can assist the partner to understand the reactivity differently, and therefore they are more open to change. The person requesting change gives three possibilities of specific, measureable, achievable behaviour changes, one of which is chosen. The emphasis is on growth and healing. This decreases blame and promotes respect and understanding. Bearing in mind the concern that the social workers had in both phase one and in phase two that daughter-in-laws are often silenced and their views are not heard, the use of the Imago Intentional Dialogue will overcome this. The communication is done respectfully and the person feels heard and understood.

### **6.3.3. Spirituality**

Spirituality and ubuntu have overlapping aspects, and both rely on abstract ideas. In this study the spirituality described by the participants related to their practices in worshipping God, and whether or not they made use of the belief in ancestors in order to do so, so this will be explored below.

In the past social workers have been discouraged from addressing spiritual problems in counselling, and it was suggested that such spiritual problems are referred to the couple's particular religious leader. However, this is slowly changing, and although it is impossible for the social worker to know and understand the nuances of all the different religions, it is possible for her/him to help mediate and negotiate problems by looking at the underlying common interests that they both have, and then to brainstorm possible solutions. Many people follow a particular religion or do a specific religious practice out of fear rather than love and thanksgiving, and so helping the couple to look for their common upward trend as opposed to the downward pull (Schleiffer, 2015) would also be useful.



As was discussed in the previous chapter, ritual plays an important role in the Zulu person's life whether this is traditionally or within their particular church. As Epston and White (1992) indicate, rituals help move the individual through a process from a beginning/prior stage where one is separated from the usual known everyday world, through the state of liminality (an unknown, betwixt and between phase) towards the new stage where one incorporates what one has learnt through the ritualistic experience into everyday life. As a result, rituals are useful spiritually and as a rite of passage. Imber-Black (1989) defines rituals as tools that assist in the development and processing of meaning, and describes the use of designing healing rituals in therapy that are applicable to the couple. Although this is an old article, its content offers very useful tools for therapy. He (1989) suggests including the five themes mentioned in chapter three: membership, healing, identity definition which are rites of passage, the expression and negotiation of beliefs which occur in religious and cultural practices; and finally celebrations.

As mentioned previously many of the Zulu rituals mentioned in chapter two and in the previous chapter contain several of these elements simultaneously which make them very powerful. Many different therapeutic practices also carry elements of ritual. For example the narrative therapy practices from therapeutic letters, to the use of outsider witnesses, to revising and honouring or denouncing the members of the club of life are practiced ritualistically. Some of the Imago Relationship Therapy processes that have elements of rituals occur when one partner floods the other with appreciation, or when the couple use the Goodbye Process as part of an intentional divorce. All these therapeutic practices not only have a practical element, but through a ritualistic nature, they also perform a spiritual function. Many religions have similar purposes for rituals – a ritual of thanksgiving, a ritual of safekeeping, a ritual to ask for help and others, and so the social worker does not necessarily need to know the specific ritual, but can assist the couple to determine what their common purpose is spiritually, and explore ways of putting this into practice, either through their own spiritual practice, or by designing a ritual through counselling.

It is therefore necessary to respect the beliefs of the couple and determine whether a traditional ritual needs to be done, or whether they can use an alternative ritual. It is

also important for the counsellor/therapist to be open to discussing ritual as it relates to spirituality.

#### **6.3.4. Ubuntu**

As mentioned previously, the nuances of *ubuntu* are difficult to define and to describe. For this research study's participants, it related to the sense of community and of family, where everyone was involved in marking the passage of life of each member. As the family and community members respect and know each other well, there is a cycle of compassion and caring for and helping each other practically, socially, emotionally and spiritually, and this then reinforces the sense of belonging and connection. In order to translate this into everyday life, the couple need to clarify their own and their partner's beliefs about *ubuntu*. As a very abstract concept, it is important to understand and name the elements of this belief, and this may be very difficult to do, particularly when there is conflict between the couple.

As *ubuntu* is so abstract the use of Narrative Therapy to name and describe the presence of or lack of *ubuntu* may be useful. Each partner can explore the impact of this on each member of the family's life, and the influence of each person on *ubuntu*, whether the presence of *ubuntu* is worthwhile and why, and then to look at how to grow it. The influence of increased *ubuntu* on the family's hopes, dreams, principles and values would result in a rich description of this complex concept.

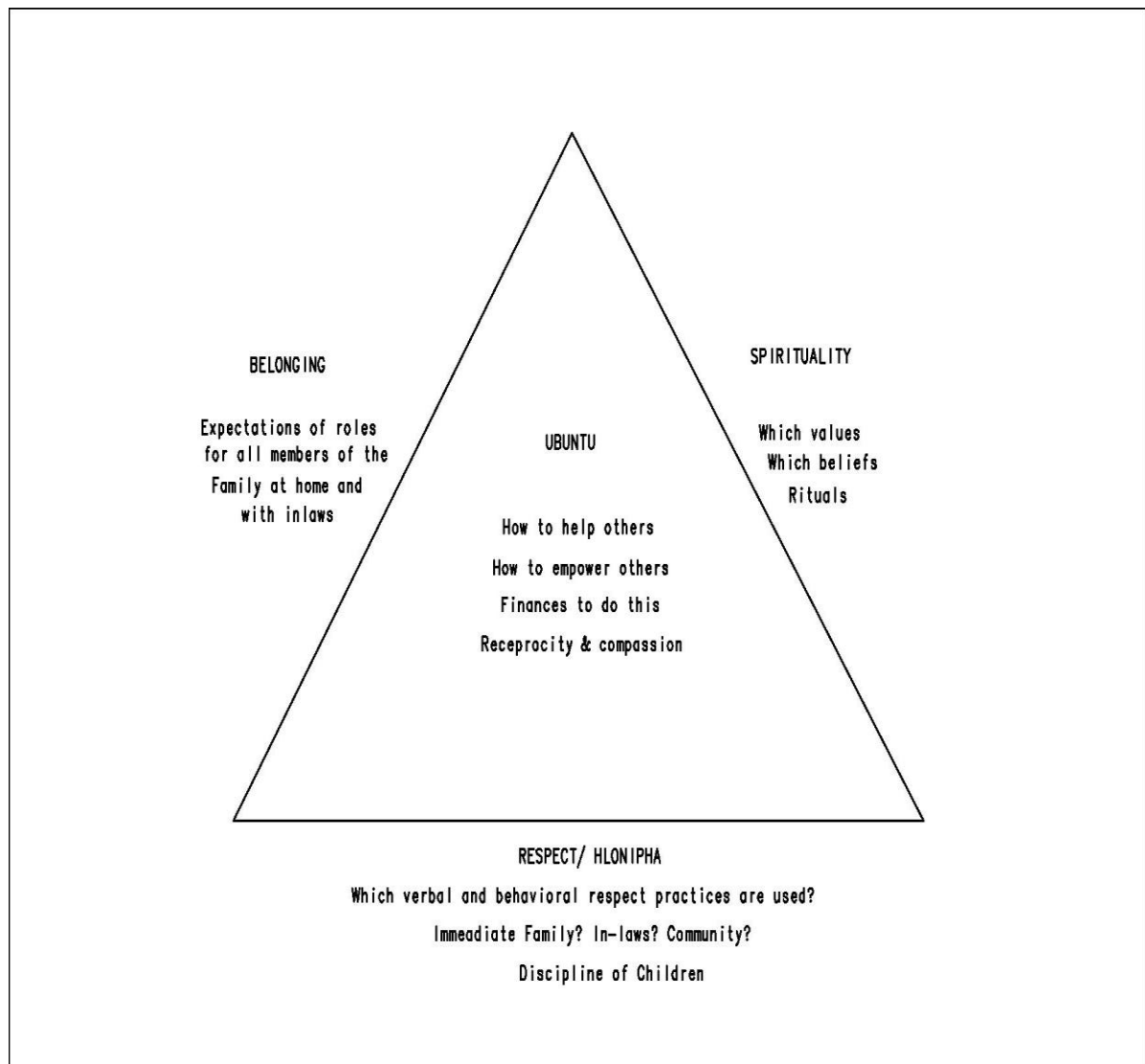
The use of the Imago Intentional Dialogue would also be useful. Once each person describes their understanding of the concept from their experience of it in childhood and in adulthood, what they value about it and what they did not appreciate about it; and are mirrored, validated and empathised with, they can then each look at their vision for the presence of *ubuntu* in the couple, family, extended family and community, and how to achieve this.

The couple need to discuss how they wish to help others practically, emotionally and financially, and to include this in the budget. Some couples may use a common budget to pay for expenses, whereas others may each have a separate budget, and

others have a joint budget for joint expenses and a separate budget for the rest. As a result they need to clarify what their method of budgeting is and from where the finances to help others is coming from. They also need to budget their time so that they can have a balance of individual, couple and family fun time, as well as time to help others. The details of helping are also important – as mentioned in the previous chapter members of both the extended families are frequently assisted financially, so the couple need to discuss the details of this.

In conclusion, when looking at marriage counselling with Zulu couples it is important to use therapeutic epistemologies and techniques that fit with and contain elements of the communality and reciprocity expressed in their world view, in order to clarify and process the aspects mentioned in the model below.

**Diagram 7: Themes for Marriage Counselling**



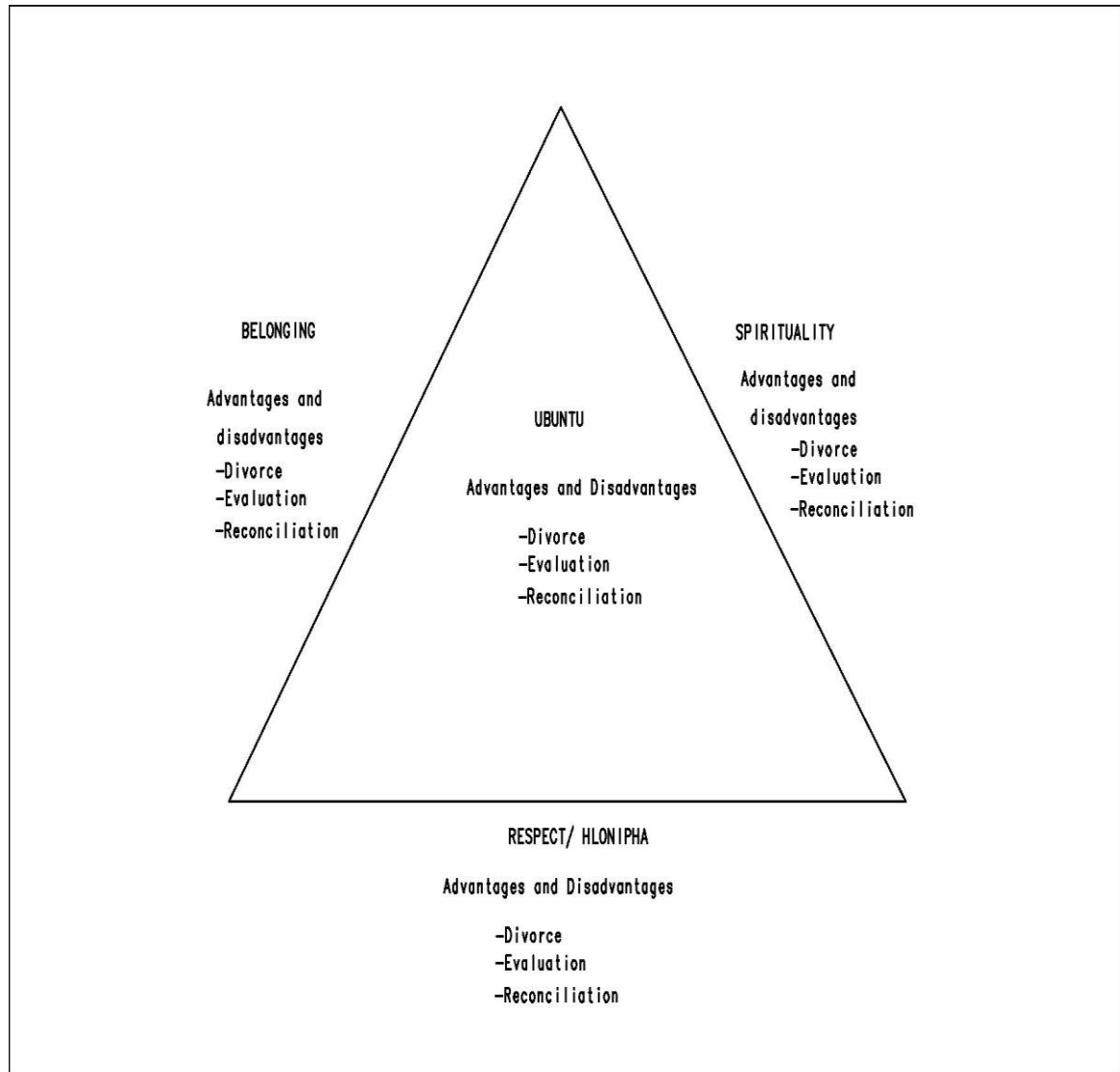
#### **6.4. Divorce vs. Reconciliation**

Making a decision about the future of the marital relationship is a life changing decision, and so many couples come for assistance with this. They may feel that they have tried to make changes in the relationship themselves, and that their spouse is not trying. They may also feel confused about the way forward. They do not want the

relationship in its present state, but they do not know what needs to be done differently. They may or may not have asked assistance from family elders or their religious leader. However many people do not as they do not want to admit to problems, do not want to be disrespected or be held accountable. As many traditional Zulu people do not view divorce as an option, the women might be unsure about whether to return to their family of origin (which is also frowned on), to live alone elsewhere, or to continue to live with their in-laws and to see their husband get romantically involved with others; whilst the man might also feel uncomfortable seeing his wife in his family home or with a new partner, and decide to live alone or with a new partner elsewhere. They are uncertain and confused about what to do.

The use of the diagram illustrated below can serve as a model when clarifying the options for reconciliation vs. evaluation (is the marriage workable?) vs. divorce/separation. Thus it is necessary that all these 4 beliefs and values in a Zulu marriage are taken into consideration when helping either an individual or a couple to look at the advantages and disadvantages of each of the options when deciding the future of the relationship.

**Diagram 8: Divorce vs. Reconciliation**



## 6.5 General counselling skills

As well as the usual counselling skills that are taught at university such as attending, listening, summarising, clarification, empathy, and mutualising (a particularly useful skill in couple counselling), and the specific skills and counselling processes mentioned above, other skills that are useful with Zulu couples that the social work participants suggested include the following:

The use of metaphors – As mentioned in chapter two the Zulu people have an oral tradition with songs, poems and stories being very much part of everyday life as outlined in the participant's descriptions of the traditional rituals of *umemulo* and *umshado* (the traditional marriage) where singing and dancing are an integral part of the celebration. Ntuli (2010) describes how folktales using mimicry, gesticulation, song and poetry, with resulting interaction between the performer and the audience, teach children how to deal with issues, and the behaviour and values that are expected. Metaphors are part of this heritage so it is a very useful tool. Externalising the problem is one of the techniques used in narrative therapy, and this fits within Zulu communication as indicated when Mr M.N. and Mr T.M. viewed external forces as the cause for traditional change. As mentioned in chapter three and above, the problem can be described as an animal or a monster, with a detailed, vivid description, which enables the couple to work as a team against the problem or monster. Power issues of who wins the right to rule, is also easily externalised and may be very useful when empowering those who appear to feel disempowered.

Narrative therapy uses metaphors a great deal in externalisation in order to make the terminology “experience-near” – Sneaky-poo as opposed to encropresis. White (2007) stresses that using metaphors also allows the couple to describe several aspects of the issue and therefore not to get stuck in dualistic thinking.

Some examples taken from Imago Relationship Therapy could include that with negative and hostile communication the relationship lake becomes polluted; they need to visit each other's world to understand the other's point of view; and wear each

other's spectacles to see the world through their eyes; they need to cross the bridge from one world to the other as host/guest (Schleiffer, 2015).

The role of metaphor, singing and dancing appears key to many facets of living such as in a family, in the workplace, in politics, and hence its importance cannot be underplayed. Specific attention to the meaning behind the metaphors, the singing and the dancing, and the role they play in increasing the feelings and experiences of belonging, ubuntu, and spirituality needs to be noted.

Affirmations and acknowledgements are used in the Zulu culture with praise singing where the individual's strengths and achievements, as well as those of his/her family and those of the ancestors are sung. This tradition can be used firstly to stress the need for acknowledgement in a relationship, but also as an exercise for the couple to do in a session. This helps increase the positive energy in the relationship. It may also invoke the power of a greater force in addressing the problem, such that there is more confidence in the outcome of the counselling session.

## **6.6 The prevention of marital problems at a macro level**

These four beliefs and values that occur in a Zulu marriage can also be used to guide preventative work for marriages as well as to enrich relationships. As mentioned by Rojano (2004), assisting the couple or family using skills such as those described above is an important first step, but there also needs to a strong use of networking as well as community development on the part of both the social worker and the couple/family. Lombard (2008:160) comments that South Africa is one of the few countries in the world with a developmental social welfare approach, and stresses that as well as other key elements, there is a need for "reconciling the micro-macro divide in developmental social welfare theory and practice". She mentions that since the Gauteng Welfare Summit in 2006, the integrated service delivery model has been adopted and this has helped to bridge the divide so that practitioners are using both traditional counselling and community development to assist clients. As community structures evolve and develop, these can also use the four values described of belonging, respect/*hlonipha*, spirituality and *ubuntu*. Thus community structures such



as churches and pre-marital groups and workshops, as well as Life Orientation classes in schools need to include these values and beliefs when working with Zulu people. Poverty alleviation programs aimed at Zulu families also can use these values to build with. Social work agencies need to be encouraged to look at different cultural practices as part of their in-service training programme on a regular basis, and this could possibly be linked to Heritage Day.

Continuing Professional Development points can be applied for from the SACSSP for this in order to encourage ongoing training and development in respect of culture sensitive practice.

Some government departments already use the evidence of using *ubuntu* as part of the workers performance appraisal forms, so *ubuntu* and the other Zulu values could be included in the performance appraisal of all social workers. University training also needs to include courses about different cultural practices. The UKZN has started to include compulsory isiZulu language lectures, which will assist with this, and in my opinion a constructive way of including the specific cultural practices is either to include these in the isiZulu classes, or to make Anthropology 1 a compulsory module in the social work degree. *Ubuntu* is mentioned as part of The South African Governmental White Paper on Welfare (1997). In addition the South African Council for Social Service Professions could include all four values of respect/*hlonipha*, spirituality, belonging as well as *ubuntu* in the ethical guidelines of the profession.

## **6.7 Recommendations for Research**

As mentioned this study was small and specifically related to Zulu people in a specific geographical area. Further research needs to be completed for other cultural groups so that greater generalisation can occur. It may be useful to combine qualitative with quantitative studies in order that the issue is understood comprehensively from various angles, and in order that statistics are produced that may generate government funding for education and training.

The use of this model and its efficacy also needs to be researched further as this study was exploratory in nature.

An interesting aspect that needs further research is how the acknowledgement and practice of these four values influence and is influenced by self respect and self worth for the individual, the couple, the family and the community.

## **6.8 Conclusion**

One of the ethical values mentioned in the Social Work ethical guidelines is to “promote conditions that encourage respect for cultural and social diversity within the Republic of South Africa and globally”. Social workers should promote policies and practices that demonstrate respect for difference, support the expansion of cultural knowledge and resources, advocate for programmes and institutions that demonstrate cultural competence, and promote policies that safeguard the rights of and confirm equity and social justice for all people (page 43 of Ethics Guidelines)

This is what this research study has attempted to do.

The rituals and practices that Zulu couples, Zulu elders and Zulu social workers found relevant and which gave meaning to their relationship have been clarified as discussed in the previous chapter. The beliefs and values that arose from this which Zulu couples in this study found relevant included respect (*hlonipha*), belonging, spirituality and *ubuntu*. These were used to develop a model that can be useful when identifying problems in the marriage and in providing guidelines for marriage counselling, as well as assisting with clarifying the options between reconciliation, evaluation and divorce/separation. The research objectives have therefore been fulfilled.

It is therefore recommended that the best practice guidelines mentioned above that are based on the African world view and on indigenous knowledge systems, are used when educating students in counselling skills, particularly in family and marital practice courses, as well as with trained social workers as part of their in-service training programmes, and in applicable journals. In this way Zulu couples will receive

relevant, applicable marital counselling that is based on their view of the world and their cultural practices, and therefore hopefully will prevent divorce or separation, and will result in strong, rich marriages that are filled with respect, a sense of belonging, deep spirituality and the spirit of compassion and *ubuntu*.

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## Letter of Ethics Clearance



16 January 2013

Mrs Catherine Mary Haselau 9151914  
School of Applied Human Sciences  
Howard College Campus

Dear Mrs Haselau

Protocol reference number: HSS/0002/013D  
Project title: Marriage in contemporary Zulu society: Implications for couple counselling

### EXPEDITED APPROVAL

I wish to inform you that your application has been granted Full Approval through an expedited review process.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. Please note: Research data should be securely stored in the school/department for a period of 5 years.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

Professor Steven Collings (Chair)

/pm

cc Supervisor: Prof MI Kasiram  
cc Academic Leader: Professor Johanna Hendrina Buitendach  
cc School Admin.: Mr MW Ngubane

Professor S Collings (Chair)  
Humanities & Social Sc Research Ethics Committee  
Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building  
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban, 4000, South Africa  
Telephone: +27 (0)31 260 3587/8350 Facsimile: +27 (0)31 260 4609 Email: ximbap@ukzn.ac.za / snymanm@ukzn.ac.za  
Founding Campuses: ■ Edgewood ■ Howard College ■ Medical School ■ Pietermaritzburg ■ Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS





## Letter 1 – Social Workers

# *Cathy Haselau*

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B.A. (S.S) (Hons) (Psychology)  
M.Med.Sci. (Social Work) Cum Laude  
Certified Imago Relationship Therapist

BHF PR No. 8902534  
SACSSP Reg. No 10-006600

Tel : (031) 2055955  
15 Newlyn Road,  
Durban, 4001.  
cathyhaselau@mweb.co.za

Dear Social Worker

I am a social worker doing marriage and relationship counseling. At the moment I am studying the marriages of couples who identify themselves as Zulus, so that we can improve our ability to help them when there are problems. I am also discussing this topic with other Zulu social workers to get their ideas. I would like to ask you to help me by taking part in the study, please?

I will be seeing you on your own as an individual, not in a group in your agency. Everything that you say will be kept in confidence and you will not be identified in my report, although I might use your words to explain something.

I will need to know about the history of your relationship as well as your personal history in order to look at what Zulu customs, traditions, beliefs, values, ideas and rituals have been useful and helped your relationship, and what you did not find useful, as well as any other ideas you have about marriage. I will also be asking what does a person or couple do in your community/family, if they have marriage problems in order to get help. I will also be asking for examples of when you have given marital advice to your clients, particularly when you used Zulu values and practices in order to help them.

I will therefore be asking you lots of questions, and if I ask you something you are not comfortable to answer, please feel free to tell me “Cathy, I don’t want to answer that.” Also if at any time you would like to stop the conversation, please let me know – it is fine.

Please note that this discussion is not marriage counseling, and so if you want counseling or help afterwards, I will refer you for marriage counselling to organisations such as FAMSA (the Family and Marriage Society of South Africa) Pietermaritzburg : 033 3424945; Durban 031 2028987; or to find your local Child Welfare Society, contact Child Welfare South Africa 011 452 4110.

Regards  
Cathy Haselau

## Letter 2 - Social Workers- Unisa

# *Cathy Haselau*

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Durban, 4001.  
[cathyhaselau@mweb.co.za](mailto:cathyhaselau@mweb.co.za)

Dear Social Worker

Having worked as a social worker doing marriage and relationship counseling for 25 years, at the moment I am studying the marriages of couples who identify themselves as Zulus, so that we can improve our ability to help them when there are problems. This research is being undertaken as part of my PhD studies at UKZN. As professionals, we need to question whether the body of knowledge that marital therapy rests on is appropriate to Zulu couples. This research aims to identify interventions that are culturally sensitive and relevant. I am also discussing this topic with other Zulu social workers to get their ideas, and I would like to ask those of you that work with couples and families to help me by taking part in the study, as we require as much professional expertise and input as possible.

I will be seeing you on your own as an individual, not in a group in your agency. Everything that you say will be kept in confidence and you will not be identified in my report, although I might use your words to explain something. During the interview you will be asked many questions. You have the right to choose not to answer any question you don't wish to, as well as the right to withdraw from participating in the research at any stage. The interviews usually take about an hour and a half, and time and venue will be organized at your convenience.

I will need to know about the history of your relationship as well as your personal history in order to look at what Zulu customs, traditions, beliefs, values, ideas and rituals have been useful and helped your life and relationships, and what you did not find useful, as well as any other ideas you have about marriage. I will also be asking what does a person or couple do in your community/family, if they have marriage problems in order to get help. I will also be asking for examples of when you have given marital advice to your clients, particularly when you used Zulu values and practices in order to help them.

If you are willing to be part of my study, I would really appreciate it. Please contact me on 031 2055955 or on email at [cathyhaselau@mweb.co.za](mailto:cathyhaselau@mweb.co.za) to book an appointment to discuss this important topic.

Regards  
Cathy Haselau

### Letter 3 -Couples

# *Cathy Haselau*

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Tel : (031) 2055955  
15 Newlyn Road,  
Durban, 4001.  
[cathyhaselau@mweb.co.za](mailto:cathyhaselau@mweb.co.za)

Dear Sir/Madam

I am a social worker doing marriage and relationship counseling. At the moment I am studying the marriages of couples who identify themselves as Zulus, so that we can improve our ability to help Zulu people when there are problems. I am also discussing this topic with other Zulu social workers to get their ideas. I would like to ask you to help me by taking part in the study, please?

Please note that this discussion is not marriage counseling, and it does not judge or evaluate your marriage.

I can either see you and your husband/wife separately because you will have different family backgrounds and different ideas, or if you prefer, I can see the two of you together. Everything that you say will be kept in confidence and you will not be identified in my report, although I might use your words to explain something. I can meet you at a place that is convenient for both of us.

I will need to know about the history of your relationship as well as your personal history in order to look at what Zulu customs, traditions, beliefs, values, ideas and rituals have been useful and helped your marriage, and what you did not find useful, as well as any other ideas you have about marriage. I will also be asking what does a person or couple do in your community/family, if they have marriage problems in order to get help. I will therefore be asking you lots of questions, and if I ask you something you are not comfortable to answer, please feel free to tell me “Cathy, I don’t want to answer that.” Also if at any time you would like to stop the conversation, please let me know – it is fine.

If you want counseling or help afterwards, I will refer you to a marriage counsellor.

Please contact me on 031 2055955 or [cathyhaselau@mweb.co.za](mailto:cathyhaselau@mweb.co.za) if you and your spouse are willing to help me. Thank you.

Regards  
Cathy Haselau

Letter 4 – Elders

*Cathy Haselau*

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B.A. (S.S) (Hons) (Psychology)  
M.Med.Sci. (Social Work) Cum Laude  
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15 Newlyn Road,  
Durban, 4001.  
[cathyhaselau@mweb.co.za](mailto:cathyhaselau@mweb.co.za)

Dear Sir/Madam

I am a social worker doing marriage and relationship counseling. At the moment I am studying the marriages of couples who identify themselves as Zulus, so that we can improve our ability to help them when there are problems. I am also discussing this topic with other Zulu social workers to get their ideas. I would like to ask you to help me by taking part in the study, please?

I would like to speak to you if you have given marital advice to any family members. Everything that you say will be kept in confidence and you will not be identified in my report, although I might use your words to explain something.

I will need to know about the history of your relationship as well as your personal history in order to look at what Zulu customs, traditions, beliefs, values, ideas and rituals have been useful and helped your marriage, and what you did not find useful, as well as any other ideas you have about marriage. I will also be asking what does a person or couple do in your community/family, if they have marriage problems in order to get help. I will therefore be asking you lots of questions, and if I ask you something you are not comfortable to answer, please feel free to tell me “Cathy, I don’t want to answer that.” Also if at any time you would like to stop the conversation, please let me know – it is fine. Please note that this discussion is not marriage counseling, and so if you want counseling or help afterwards, I will refer you to another marriage counsellor.

Please contact me on 031 2055955 or [cathyhaselau@mweb.co.za](mailto:cathyhaselau@mweb.co.za) if you are willing to help me, so that we can book times for the discussions.

Thank you.

Regards

Cathy Haselau

## Basic Interview Schedule Guidelines

**Ref:**

**Date:**

**Venue:**

**Age:**

### Informed written consent:

I am a social worker doing marriage and relationship counseling. At the moment I am studying the marriages of couples who identify themselves as Zulus, so that we can improve our ability to help them when there are problems. I am also discussing this topic with other Zulu social workers to get their ideas. I would like to ask you to help me by taking part in the study, please?

I am willing to see you and your husband/wife separately because you will have different family backgrounds and different ideas, or if you prefer, I can see you together. Everything that you say will be kept in confidence and you will not be identified in my report, although I might use your words to explain something.

I will need to know about the history of your relationship as well as your personal history in order to look at what Zulu customs, traditions, beliefs, values, ideas and rituals have been useful and helped your marriage, and what you did not find useful, as well as any other ideas you have about marriage. I will also be asking what does a person or couple do in your community/family, if they have marriage problems in order to get help. I will therefore be asking you lots of questions, and if I ask you something you are not comfortable to answer, please feel free to tell me “Cathy, I don’t want to answer that.” Also if at any time you would like to stop the conversation, please let me know – it is fine.

Please note that this discussion is not marriage counseling, and so if you want counseling or help afterwards, I will refer you for marriage counselling to organisations such as FAMSA (the Family and Marriage Society of South Africa) Pietermaritzburg : 033 3424945; Durban 031 2028987); or to find your local Child Welfare Society, contact Child Welfare South Africa 011 452 4110.

Do you have any questions?

I agree to the above:

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Date:

Age:

Education:

Employment:

Religion;

Number, age and sex of children

## THEMES TO BE EXPLORED

### **Relationship background**

#### **Courtship**

The participant's experience of customs and rituals, during dating and courtship – which were useful and which were not. If some rituals were not used, why not?

Would they do them in the future?

Their understanding of the meaning and purpose of dating and courtship in their own experience, and in the Zulu culture.

#### **Proposal to get married**

The process of family involvement in the proposal and why this occurred.

The use of rituals for the proposal.

The use of the practice of ilobolo and its meaning.

Were there any rituals that were not completed at the time, and have they been completed at a later time?

What were the benefits of these rituals? What were the problems associated with completing these rituals?

#### **Marriage rituals**

When the couple got married, were they married according to tribal custom, in the church/mosque, or in a registry office? Or more than one?

The rituals used during the wedding, and the meaning these rituals had; and whether there were rituals that were incomplete then.

What were the benefits of these rituals? What were the problems associated with completing these rituals?

Did you introduce your wife/husband to your ancestors? When? How? Why?

⋮

## **Marriage**

Decisions of where to live, and any rituals used for this.

Which rituals and customs were used to celebrate the birth of children, and the meaning and purpose of these. Benefits and problems with these.

The involvement of the ancestors in family life – introducing wife and children, and in everyday life. Examine the meaning and purpose of this, as well as benefits and problems.

Polygamy vs monogamy?

What does respect (hlonipha) mean? How is it shown?

How do you feel about

forced marriages (*Ukuthwala* as practised currently),

virginity testing,

widow's rituals,

The different possible avenues for assistance for the following:

Psycho-social problems or relationship problems: the family elders, the village elders, or the Nkosi, or the sangoma

If the couple has asked for marital assistance from family elders/social worker, what was the advice given, what Zulu rituals, beliefs, or values were used?

Health problems: Western medicine or Zulu traditional medicine, or both.

Spiritual problems: the use of Christian/Islamic resources (church/mosque/priests) and traditional resources.

The decision-making in the marriage, roles, child-care, finances

The demonstration of love and respect within the marriage, within the family, and extended family.

Discuss any differences to the way of the culture.

## **Family background**

Family of origin relationships and the meaning this has.

Zulu customs, rituals that were used in childhood and rites of passage, and their purpose and meaning. Which rituals would you like to use in the future and why.

The values that were learnt about growing up as a Zulu person that were beneficial; and that may have caused problems.

What are the differences between the values learnt by Zulu young people compared to those from Western or Eastern cultures.

What Zulu values/customs are you teaching your children? Why? What are you proud of being a Zulu person that you want your children/grandchildren to learn?

**Elders:**

Which of these did you use to give guidance or advise to your family member who had marital problems? Why?

**Generic Social Workers:**

Which of these did you use with your Zulu clients? Why? Can you give me an example of a case where you used this?



## **PROGRAMME & QUESTIONS FOR FAMSA SOCIAL WORK GROUP DISCUSSIONS**

09.00 - 09.30 Introduction, goals and purpose  
09.30 – 10.45

Input on the Philosophy of Zulu marriage

Feedback from couple interviews; family elders' interviews; and social work interviews from PhD research with discussion

What do you think?  
How does this relate to your experience?  
How have you counselled couples with this problem?

10.45 – 11.00 Tea

11.00 – 12.00 Small group discussion on specific best practice counselling skills for Zulu couples.

What skills do you feel are important to use for Zulu couple counselling?  
How can we ensure that couples feel respected?  
How can we discuss and process the four values of respect, belonging, spirituality and Ubuntu with our clients?  
Information on Nwoye's model of African marriage counselling – what do you think?

12.00 – 12.30 Conclusions

## FAMSA DISCUSSION GROUPS - INPUT ON AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY

### UBUNTU

There is no clear definition of *ubuntu* as it is a concept that, though experienced in many African cultures for many generations, has only recently been labeled as such. Gade (2011) in his examination of written information about *ubuntu* indicates that although there were occasional mention of *ubuntu* since 1846, it has only been since various African nations such as Tanzania became independent in the 1960's that concepts similar to *ubuntu* are mentioned in the political "narrative of return" back to pre-colonial society. Since then the literature on *ubuntu* has increased, particularly since the first democratic elections in South Africa. However it is only since 1995 that Shutte linked *ubuntu* to the proverb '*umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*' (Gade, 2011). Reciprocity is also discussed by Nyaumwe and Mkabele (2007: 152) who indicate that *ubuntu* "is premised on the reciprocal belief that an individual's humanity is expressed through the personal relationships with others in a community and in turn other people in that community recognize the individual's humanity".

The South African Governmental White Paper on Welfare officially recognises *Ubuntu* as: "The principle of caring for each other's well-being...and a spirit of mutual support...Each individual's humanity is ideally expressed through his or her relationship with others and theirs in turn through a recognition of the individual's humanity. Ubuntu means that people are people through other people. It also acknowledges both the rights and the responsibilities of every citizen in promoting individual and societal well-being" (Government Gazette, 1996: 18).

Poovan describes five social values of *ubuntu*. The first is that of survival whereby African people helped one another, pooled their resources and "through a shared will and collaborative spirit" have been able to survive extreme hardship (Poovan et al., 2006:18). The second value, which is linked to the first, is that of a spirit of solidarity within the family, and between the community members. Thus a person is defined through his/her community rather than through individual personality; the interpersonal and biological bonds of solidarity are expressed constantly in everyday life both practically as well as spiritually. Compassion is the third social value of

*ubuntu*, where from early in life the African person is taught that as every person is connected, everyone needs to take care of, help and be responsible for others, without expecting anything in return. As Poovan et al. (2006) indicate, this value is entrenched in the African psyche. The fourth value is that of *respect* – *ukuhlonipha* - which is one of the building blocks of the community as it delegates the position of the person within the hierarchical society. *Dignity* is the fifth value, and arises from and reinforces respect. Through offering respect to the elders and people in authority, these members become dignified.

Americans of African descent experience positive mental health through feelings of connectedness, social competence and group consciousness; as opposed to Americans of European descent who experience positive mental health through individuation, self competence and personal consciousness (Wilson and Williams 2013).

In the African world view, “as human beings whose identity is defined through interactions with other human beings, it follows that what we do to others eventually feeds through the interwoven fabric of social, economic, and political relationships to impact upon us as well” (Murithi, 2009: 226).

The African worldview stresses the communal, reciprocal nature of relationships. Reciprocity is highlighted in rituals and ceremonies such as *umemulu* (the coming of age ceremony particularly for women (Magwaza, 2008), *ilobolo* (bride price) and *ukuhlonipha* (practices of respect – a rule of respectful, deferential behaviours : what to wear, how and when to stand, sit or kneel, where to walk, where to look) and language that is very hierarchical and dictates how to greet, who may speak to whom, how they may speak, and what they may discuss.

Western feminists may challenge these practices by suggesting that although technically there is reciprocity, it is unbalanced due to the difference in power between men and women, and between the youth and the elders in such a structured patriarchy. In this regard, Roberts (2010) has described how feminist writers have criticised *ubuntu* as upholding patriarchal practices, and suggests that such writers in South Africa and Africa should be invited to contribute papers on *Ubuntu* to stimulate further dialogue and debate, particularly in the areas of patriarchy; gender and race; the various gender roles in an *Ubuntu* religious and cultural practice; *Ubuntu* and

gender violence; and *Ubuntu* and the status of women in socio-economic and socio-political activities (Roberts, 2010) .

When there is conflict, the family and relevant community members, such as elders or experts in the topic, gather together to discuss the issues until there is consensus (Murithi, 2009). There is no possibility to agree to disagree – there needs to be agreement in order for the community to move forward.

Eze (2008:386) challenges the view of consensus as being constructive. He feels that sayings indicative of consensus such as *Simunye* – we are one – are used politically, and “absorbs multiple viewpoints through a totalitarian uniformity”. In the writers opinion this argument carries weight as viewpoints that are contrary and that criticise authority, both within the family and within the community, are often seen as disloyal and disrespectful. This therefore may impact the concept of freedom of speech, and the resulting variety of expressed opinions. In addition, conflicted parties may continue to feel antagonistic towards each other as this stance suggests domination and acceptance of one point of view only.

Though an individual’s identity is based on the identity of the collective group and the concept of belonging, African societies have complex divisions based on tribal, religious, ethnic and clan lines. “Tensions ... are also due to the urban-rural and modernist-traditionalist dichotomy and intra-ethnic difference and division”.

Hence it appears that the concept of *ubuntu* has many facets that may be very subtle and even invisible to a Western therapist, hence it is important to be aware of these facets in order to appreciate how to work with these during counselling.

Helping methods which are employed by traditional helpers include, amongst others, direct advice, the use of metaphor, and the use of ritual and spirituality. Ross (2010) explains that traditional healing attempts to restore harmony and balance; focusing on the physical symptoms whilst simultaneously attempting to re-integrate the person with their community, the earth, and the spiritual world. Thabede (2008) stresses that there are common underlying themes that characterise African culture, which are belief in ancestors, belief in a Supreme Being, belief in witchcraft, belief in traditional healing and the various rites of passage. The ancestors are extremely important in the lives of the Zulu people; they form part of the family, with whom there needs to be regular contact, and they have powers for good or ill (Thabede,

2008). These beliefs will obviously influence the Zulu marriage, yet they appear to be ignored in Western methods of relationship counselling.

Murithi (2009: 228) describes the process of peace making and *ubuntu* in societies: acknowledging guilt, showing remorse and repenting, asking for and giving forgiveness, and paying compensation or reparation in order to commit to reconciliation. Both the victim and the perpetrator are involved in this process. Nwoye (2000:348) similarly uses role theory to look at the normative “obligations/expectations and privileges are taken as being linked to the occupancy of social positions”. He uses a courtroom trial method to do so, where he makes an objective assessment of the quality of the roles each partner is fulfilling (Nwoye 2006). He sees each of them separately several times, hearing each of their versions regarding the issue; he uses traditional techniques such as metaphors, proverbs and stories and where necessary teaches life skills, in order to harmonise their values, encouraging mutual validation and affirmation in order to introduce an alternative view and to grow their marriage. He sees the role of the counsellor as “building bridges between the dissenting spouses and helping to inject fresh perceptions in the way they conceptualize their conflict” (2006:439). He then determines who was at fault, how to improve the situation, determines some form of reparation to encourage forgiveness, and once this is acknowledged, the couple meet with him for a ritualistic ceremony of reconciliation.

However, in order to develop indigenous theory, policy and therapeutic methods it is also necessary “to engage in reflective learning with the persons who are most knowledgeable about what Africans require and how they best can be served”. Bar-On suggests talking to, amongst others, the clients as well as “aunts and uncles in the extended family” (2003: 35).